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Arthur Schlesinger Jr.

On Heroic Leadership

and the Dilemma of Strong Men and Weak Peoples

POLITICAL life in the 20th century has been marked by a certain tendency towards one-man rule. This tendency has experienced setbacks and even reverses, and one is by no means justified in concluding an irresistible drive towards Cæsarism. Nonetheless the resort to the heroic leader has become a sufficiently common phenomenon to deserve thoughtful consideration. Such resort has taken place in the new nations, where the thrust towards modernisation has often seemed to require national discipline of a sort best stimulated and enforced by a powerful personality: one need only mention Egypt, Thailand, Pakistan, Burma, Iraq, the Sudan, Tunisia, Lebanon, Indonesia, Cuba, Ghana, Guinea. Such resort has also taken place in older nations where strong personal leadership has seemed the only way to suspend divisive conflicts, and avert social disintegration: for example, France.

The question inevitably arises of the implications for democracy of this reliance on the heroic (or pseudo-heroic) individual. How far is heroic leadership necessary and under what conditions? How far legitimate? Is it compatible with democracy? At what stage does it become a menace? How can one distinguish heroic leadership which supports democracy from that which threatens democracy? In what circumstances, in short, if any, can believers in democracy accept the heroic leader?

I should like to examine these questions by discussing (1) the place of the heroic leader in classical democratic theory; (2) the problem of heroic leadership in the 20th century; and (3) the criteria for reconciling heroic leadership and democracy.

From Locke to Lincoln

THE heroic leader has always constituted an anomaly in democratic theory. Since democratic theory arose historically as a protest against theses of the "divine right" of particular personalities, its early proponents naturally put their major emphasis on the sufficiency of the people (or a majority thereof) as against the need for heroic leadership. Most democratic theory derives from Locke; and, in Locke's account, the people assert their rightful control over the state through a process essentially of spontaneous combustion.

> The people, [he wrote] generally ill-treated and contrary to right, will be ready upon any occasion to ease themselves of a burden that sits heavy upon them. They will wish and seek for the opportunity, which in the change, weakness, and accidents of humane affairs, seldom delays long to offer itself.[1]

This analysis of the requirements of a revolutionary situation proposed no special role for leadership; it stands in marked contrast to, for example, the writings of Blanqui or to Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?* The Lockian assumption was that the people were endowed with sufficient purpose and intelligence to produce out of themselves, so to speak, the initiatives necessary both for successful revolution and for effective government thereafter.

Conventional democratic theory has accepted the Lockian bias on this matter ever since. If one defines democracy as a system in which the majority under constitutional procedures freely

[1] Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government.*

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chooses among competing persons for limited-term control of the state, then the inescapable drift of democratic theory is against investing too much significance in any particular competitor.

Other inherent factors have reinforced this tendency to minimise the problem of leadership. Thus democratic theory has resisted emphasis on leadership for ideological reasons—because this emphasis has seemed to imply that some men should lead and others should follow, a proposition which clashes with the traditional democratic commitment to equality and to majoritarianism. It has resisted this emphasis on moral grounds—because it has seemed to overlook the democratic conviction that power corrupts. It has resisted this emphasis on emotional grounds—because it irritates that populist strain in democracy which often includes an envy of superior persons.

Most important of all, it has resisted this emphasis on compelling practical grounds—because it has seemed to encourage the erosion of democracy. Since Lockian theory assumed the omnicompetence of majorities, most post-Lockian attempts to rehabilitate the idea of leadership have begun precisely by asserting the incompetence of majorities. Rousseau, it is true, argued the case for heroic pro-democratic leadership in the instances of the Legislator, who was to constitute the state, and the Dictator, who might be called upon to save it; but these were both emergency functions, and his theory made no provision for leadership as a continuing feature of democratic society.[2] In any event, his limited vindication of leadership seemed only further evidence of the perils of leadership theory since his whole system led so easily towards totalitarian democracy. And most ideologists of leadership have been, like Carlyle and Lenin, polemicists against democracy: they have invoked the supposed ignorance, fecklessness, and instability of the crowd as a chief reason for according special respect to leaders. Historically, the idea of leadership has thus become associated with élitist philosophies; leadership theory has seemed a weapon to be employed by reactionaries or revolutionaries against Lockian democracy. And history seems fully to have corroborated this supposed association. The *Führerprinzip*, the cult of personality, the rituals of hero-worship, have too often led to the suppression of freedom, the establishment of authoritarianism, and the destruction of democracy.

All these considerations, both inherent and historical, have thus produced the implicit assumption in classical democratic theory that numerical majorities provide a substitute for heroic leadership, and that too much speculation about the need for leadership may be subversive of democracy.

IT IS evident that one confronts here a curious discrepancy between democratic theory and democratic practice, because in practice democracy as a form of government has accepted—indeed, has regularly required and demanded and produced—heroic leaders. There are several reasons why democracy has employed in practice what it has rejected in principle.

For one thing, democracy involves a *functional* need for strong leadership. When one gives political power to the masses, one risks the hopeless diffusion of decision and purpose—unless leadership arises to offset the centrifugal effects of the dispersion of political power. From the start, democracies have been able to concert their energies and focus their aspirations only as strong individuals embodied and clarified the tendencies of their people. This functional need for strong leadership is distinct from the technical need for expertise produced by the growing complexities of industrial society. Thus Andrew Jackson was a strong President of the United States at a time when the administrative problems of government were sufficiently easy that he could plausibly describe official duties as "so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance." When times moved beyond that state of beatitude imagined by William Jennings Bryan where any man of good heart could write a currency law, the problem of democratic leadership became more specialised and more urgent; but it did not essentially change.

DEMOCRACY'S functional need for leadership was recognised at an early point in the United States. In the 70th *Federalist* paper, Alexander Hamilton addressed himself to this issue with characteristic cogency, setting forth an argument which was not inconsistent with Locke—with which, indeed, Locke might have agreed—but which Locke never made. Hamilton began by citing, as "not without its advocates," the idea that "a vigorous Executive is incon-

[2] Cf. *The Social Contract*, Book II (chap. 7) and Book IV (chap. 6).

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sistent with the genius of Republican government." This seemed to him wrong; more than that, he continued, believers in republican government (by which Hamilton meant representative government controlled by the majority) could not admit the truth of this idea "without at the same time admitting the condemnation of their own principles." After all, Hamilton said, "a feeble Executive implies a feeble execution of the government. A feeble execution is but another phrase for a bad execution; and a government ill executed, whatever it may be in theory, must be, in practice, a bad government." If people really believed in republican government, they must surely wish that government to be efficiently executed. Therefore, "energy in the Executive is a leading character in the definition of good government."

> It is essential to the protection of the community against foreign attacks; it is not less essential to the steady administration of the laws; to the protection of property against those irregular and high-handed combinations which sometimes interrupt the ordinary course of justice; to the security of liberty against the enterprises and assaults of ambition, of faction, and of anarchy.

The way to preserve freedom, Hamilton wrote, was not to enfeeble the executive but to strengthen the residual power of the people against the executive.

If any are disposed to reject the testimony of Hamilton because of incipient traces of élitism in his thought, it should be noted that, on this point, he and Thomas Jefferson were in substantial agreement.[3] As Jefferson wrote to John Adams in 1813, "There is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds for this are *virtue and talents*. The natural aristocracy I consider to be the most precious gift of nature, *for the instruction, the trusts, and the government of society*." Jefferson added: "May we not even say, that form of government is best, which provides the most effectually for a pure selection of the natural *'aristoi'* into the offices of government?" Lincoln, too, faced the question when he asked whether all republics must necessarily have "this inherent and fatal weakness." "Must a government," he asked, "of necessity be too strong for the liberties of its people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?"[4] His own administration gave that question an effective answer.

It can be further contended that democracy involves not only a functional but a *moral* need for strong leadership. The Lockian bias in favour of the people as against the leaders implied a certain denigration of the role of the individual in history; and subsequent defenders of democracy rashly reduced the role to the point where the individual no longer mattered and where impersonal forces, working through the masses, took control of human events. In Tolstoy, for example, the heroic leader became no more than "the slave of history" (*War and Peace*).

Yet this line of argument ends up in an historical determinism which deprives history of its moral dimension by depriving the individual of accountability for his acts. No historical philosophy, in its ultimate implications, could more profoundly contradict the democratic faith in the freedom, dignity, and responsibility of man. A convinced democrat must therefore make the case against fatalism; but to do so, to restore the moral dimension to history, one must contend for the potency of human choice: individual decisions have to make a difference to history after all. This does not mean the decisions of *all* individuals; but it does mean those of *some*; and those individuals who do make a difference become the emblems and proof of man's freedom. As Emerson said in *Representative Men*, his astute Yankee response to the romantic braggadocio of *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, "Great men exist that there may be greater men." The heroic leader has the Promethean responsibility to affirm human freedom against the supposed inevitabilities of history. As he does this, he combats the infection of fatalism which might otherwise paralyse mass democracy. Without heroic leaders, a society would tend to acquiesce in the drift of history. Such acquiescence is easy enough; the great appeal of fatalism, indeed, is as a refuge from the terrors of responsibility. A purposeful and vital democracy must rest on a belief in the potency of choice—on the conviction that individual decisions do affect the course of events.

Hamilton and Emerson thus modified the classical theory to assign a positive role to leadership. In so doing, they correctly interpreted the experience of democracy in the United States. The American political system, though misconceived by some as made up of three coordinate branches of equal powers, has worked best as a presidential system. Only strong Presidents have been able to overcome the tendencies towards inertia inherent in a structure so cunningly composed of checks and balances. Great

[3] Hamilton, *Federalist* No. 70; Jefferson to Adams, October 28th, 1813.

[4] Lincoln, Message to Congress, July 4th, 1861.

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Britain, too, has tempered pure Lockianism by an implicit recognition of the role of positive leadership, though in the main the presidential system seems better designed than the parliamentary system to give force to the Hamilton conception of leadership.

The United States and Britain, being empirical nations, were thus prepared to grant some recognition to the role of leadership. On the other hand, being empirical nations, they were not concerned with incorporating their deviations into a basic reconstruction of democratic theory. And on the continent of Europe, where people cared about ideology and the conventional democratic view lingered in its purity, democrats continued to cling to multi-party parliamentarianism, to mistrust leadership and to feel that dominant personalities imperilled free institutions.

For a long time, the relationship between democracy and leadership was a question of political philosophy. But towards the end of the 19th century the sociology of politics began to displace political theory as the means of getting at political truth; and the discussion of leadership entered a new phase. Pareto and Mosca contended for the pivotal role of élites in history; Michels set forth the iron law of oligarchy in the belief that he was demonstrating scientifically that "every system of leadership is incompatible with the most essential postulates of democracy;"[5] and, in particular, Max Weber proposed a theory of authority which has had a hypnotic effect on subsequent analysis.

WEBER'S contention, of course, was that there were three pure types of legitimate authority: *traditional*, as in a tribe; *rational*, as in a bureaucracy; and *charismatic*, as under a spell. As a student of history, I must confess to a certain uneasiness at this attempt to conduct historical enquiries in terms of "ideal types;" and, as an observer of politics, I am bound to protest against the extent to which Weber's types seem to have pre-empted the discussion of leadership. For Weber's typology neither derives from nor applies to a study of democratic society. Most authority in a democracy rests neither on traditional nor on rational nor on charismatic bases. No doubt the exercise of authority in a democracy often contains traces of all elements in Weber's triad; but, in essence, the political leader in a democracy behaves neither like the tribal chieftain, who confines himself to a repetition of practices sanctioned by immemorial custom; nor like the bureaucrat, who dwells in a world of strict and rational routines and rules; nor like the charismatic leader, who demands and receives unconditional assent and obedience. The grounds of the democratic leader's authority rest characteristically on his capacity to gain *conditional* support from enough interests and people to put together a *temporary* majority; his method is characteristically a pragmatic balancing of forces, appeals, and policies: none of this finds room in Weber's system. For this reason the Weberian categories have reinforced the European inability to cope intellectually with the problems of democratic leadership.

The concept of charisma is perhaps the most mischievous of Weber's contributions to the study of authority. For Weber charisma, in its purity, is clearly a pre-industrial concept: "the further back we look in history, the more we find this [charismatic basis for authority] to be the case." On one occasion, he referred to Robespierre's glorification of reason as "the *last* form which charisma has assumed in its long road of varied and rich destinies; and, in the main, charisma is for him a specific feature of the world of myth and sorcery. Weber writes:

> The legitimacy of charismatic rule thus rests upon the belief in magical powers, revelations, and hero worship. The source of these beliefs is the "proving" of the charismatic quality through miracles, through victories, and other successes.... Such beliefs and the claimed authority resting on them therefore disappear... as soon as the charismatically qualified person appears to be devoid of his magical power or forsaken by his god.

The particular characteristics of charismatic authority, as defined by Weber, further emphasise its irrelevance to the modern technical world. Thus charismatic authority has nothing to do with day-to-day administration. It is

> specifically outside the realm of everyday routine and the profane sphere.... Both rational and traditional authority are specifically forms of everyday routine control of action, while the charismatic type is the *direct antithesis* of this. Bureaucratic authority is specifically rational, in the sense of being bound to intellectually analysable rules; while charismatic authority is specifically irrational in the sense of being foreign to all rules.

Charisma is equally "foreign to economic considerations." The staff of a charismatic leader has no structure or allocation of responsibility. "There is no such thing as 'appointment' or

[5] Robert Michels, *Political Parties*, p. 400.

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'dismissal,' no career, no promotion.... There is no hierarchy.... There is no such thing as a definite sphere of authority and of competence." Charisma, in short, is prophetic, mystical, unstable, irrational, and, by Weber's definition, incapable of dealing with the realities of modern industrial society.[6]

Weber does make a vague effort to rescue the concept of charisma for modern purposes by describing a process which he calls the "routinisation of charisma"—*i.e.*, the acceptance by charismatic leaders of everyday administrative necessities. But the effect of the routinisation process is evidently to transform charisma into traditionalism or into bureaucratic rationalism—into the forms of authority, in short, which Weber had previously defined as the "specific" antithesis of charisma. As soon as charisma becomes organised and rationalised, it ceases—by Weber's admission—to be charismatic and becomes its opposite. If this is so, it only demonstrates the more conclusively the uselessness of charisma as a concept with which to analyse leadership in more complicated cases than those of medicine men, warrior chieftains, and religious prophets.

IT IS worthwhile to argue this point at length because of the role the concept of charisma continues to play in discussions of leadership. Surely the only western leader since Robespierre who qualifies as charismatic in Weber's full sense is Hitler. Perhaps cases could be made out for Napoleon, Mussolini, Lenin, or Stalin—though, even if these men had charisma for certain associates or followers, their essential success was not due to divine afflatus of a charismatic—*i.e.*, compulsive, thaumaturgic, unorganised, irrational—sort but precisely to highly conscious and rational organisation. And to apply the adjective to leaders in a democracy—to Gladstone or Lloyd George or Churchill or Wilson or Roosevelt or even to Bismarck or de Gaulle—is to drain the concept of all meaning.

Most contemporary usage of the word charismatic (outside parts of Africa and Asia, where Weber's strict definition still applies) is metaphorical; the word has become a chic synonym for "heroic" or for "demagogic" or even just for "popular." Indeed, so far as Weber was concerned, individual leadership itself was a vanishing factor in a world increasingly dominated by the remorseless "march of bureaucracy." Charisma, which stood for individual spontaneity in his system, was losing out inexorably in the contest with bureaucratisation; in Weber's vision of the future, the methodical rationalisation of life decreed that heroic leaders be replaced by anonymous administrators. This thesis of bureaucratic determinism has great value in directing our attention to certain features common to all industrial societies, whatever their ideological disagreements; but it obviously greatly underrates the persistence of politics, even in the most advanced bureaucratic states; and it has little relevance at all to the question of leadership in a democracy.

To sum up: the original political theory of democracy minimised the role of heroic leadership. In the United States and Great Britain, empirical considerations modified classical democratic ideology in the direction of an acceptance of leadership as an organic part of the democratic process; but no new grand synthesis appeared to supersede the earlier, anti-leadership formulations of the democratic position. On the continent of Europe, the conventional ideology, crystallised in the parliamentary system and unmodified by experience, continued to inculcate a distrust of heroic leadership. In the meantime, leadership theory had become, in Europe at least, identified with anti-democratic social philosophies.

As a consequence, the conventional political theory of democracy remained unprepared to deal with the problems of leadership. And the intellectual position of defenders of democracy was further demoralised by the Weberian analysis of authority in terms which excluded democratic leadership and by the Weberian vision of a future in which individual leadership wouldn't matter much anyway.

To-day, therefore, in spite of the insights of Hamilton and Emerson and of the examples of a score of statesmen from Washington to Churchill, democratic theory still stands baffled and irresolute before the phenomenon of leadership. It remains unprepared to explain the necessities of heroic leadership; and it can thus provide little guidance to countries which see no alternative but resort to such leadership.

The Coming Cæsars?

THE problem of heroic leadership appears most urgent in the so-called under-developed countries seeking to compress centuries of social experience into a single generation and to

[6] Gerth & Mills, *From Max Weber*, pp. 267, 272, 296; and Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, pp. 360–2.

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advance from the ox-cart to the steel-mill in a single leap. The passion for forced-draft modernisation imposes on these nations an exceedingly difficult and tangible economic problem: that is, to produce as much as possible and consume as little as possible so there will be savings enough to maintain a high rate of capital investment. It imposes on them also a less tangible but equally difficult social problem: that is, to revolutionise ways of work and life hardened in centuries of custom without at the same time inciting anxieties or releasing ambitions which will destroy national cohesion. The need in these new nations, in short, is for social discipline which will see traditional societies through the ordeal and tumult of transition into relatively modern industrial states.

What political system is best adapted to bring about the necessary combination of discipline and progress? In countries like Britain and the United States, with plenty of time and resources, with traditions of education and self-government, without major population problems, and with a belief in strong leadership, multi-party democracy was able to do the job—though even in these countries the suffrage, for example, was extended slowly (if far more slowly than necessary) and did not become universal for adults until after World War I. But few of the new nations of the mid-20th century are comparably blessed: they are desperately in a hurry, their resources are inadequate compared to their populations, their level of education is low, their civic traditions are feeble, and modernisation threatens nearly all the traditional institutions which hold society together. In such conditions, it is hardly surprising that heroic leadership should seem the most effective means of charging semi-literate people with a sense of national and social purpose.

The real division in these countries is not between left and right; it is between hard and soft—between leadership which has the will to do what must be done to lay the foundations for economic growth, and leadership which falters before the vested interests of traditional society or the peremptory challenges of rising social groups. This desire for *effectiveness* accounts, of course, for the vast appeal of Communism to the peoples of under-developed countries. (Ironically Communism's historic destiny, despite the expectations of Marx, appears to be a a technique for rapid modernisation in the agrarian world, not as a guarantee of millennium in the industrial world.) For similar reasons, non-Communist countries seeking modernisation have recourse to dominating personalities—Kemal, Diem, Sukarno, Ayub, Bourguiba, Nkrumah, Magsaysay, Munoz, Nyerere, Mboya; and Nasser, Castro, Mao. Even in a nation like India, which has made an extraordinary effort to establish and use representative institutions, one feels that democracy would not have had its relative success if it had not been for the personal authority of Nehru. The use of the heroic leader as a focus for purpose in the epoch of transition is an obvious convenience for a new nation. The question is whether it can be reconciled to the theory and practice of democracy.

And, as I have already noted at the start, the resort to heroic leadership is not just a phenomenon of the new nations. European nations, struggling with problems beyond their control, watching national energies dissipate in the merry-go-round of multi-party democracy, have sought discipline and purpose in the strong leader. De Gaulle's return to power in France is only the most spectacular example of a mood which has found milder expression in Adenauer of Germany, in the confusion which has overtaken Italy since the death of de Gasperi, and even—it is solemnly argued—in the benign "father image" of Eisenhower in the United States.

THIS rush to heroic leadership does obvious damage to the classical theory of democracy. Some writers have concluded from it that democracy as a system of government is moribund. Amaury de Riencourt has thus contended in *The Coming Cæsars* that expanding democracy leads to imperialism and that imperialism inevitably ends in the destruction of democracy; further that, as society grows more equalitarian, it tends increasingly to vest absolute power in the hands of a leader.

> Cæsarism is therefore the logical outcome of a double current... the growth of a world empire that cannot be ruled by republican institutions, and the gradual extension of mass democracy, which ends in the destruction of freedom and in the concentration of supreme power in the hands of one man.

And even those who see no massive historic inevitabilities in these tendencies can legitimately wonder whether powerful leaders or élites are ever likely to relinquish their power peaceably; and how people are supposed to qualify themselves for self-government in any other way than

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through undergoing the experience of governing themselves.

"The attempt to make dictatorship serve the ends of democracy," wrote Michels, "is tantamount to the endeavour to utilise war as the most efficient means for the defence of peace, or to employ alcohol in the struggle against alcoholism."

Yet is the situation so truly hopeless? Does the contemporary resort to heroic leadership signify the existence of irresistible social tendencies with which democracy cannot cope and which will surely destroy it? Or is it possible to reconcile the existing situation to some degree at least with democratic theory and propose criteria by which heroic leadership which helps democracy can be distinguished from that which hurts it?

Let me return for a moment to Rousseau; for his discussions of the Legislator and the Dictator cover precisely the two cases of one-man rule described in the previous section. The founding of a state, Rousseau wrote in his *Contrat Social*, required a Law-giver, "an extraordinary figure in the State," a person of superior intelligence and character who could, if necessary, claim divine sanction for his recommendations. His mission was to constitute the state and was over as soon as the state became a going concern; but for that period he was indispensable, and his personal role was thus legitimate. This was Rousseau's first defence of dramatic individual intervention into the democratic process; the second came about because the Legislator, however wise, could not provide for everything in advance; "the ability to foresee that some things cannot be foreseen is a very necessary quality." While only the gravest danger could justify any fundamental change in public order, Rousseau wrote, still it would be an error to make laws and institutions so rigid that they could never be suspended. Every society may confront the need for a Dictator.

> Where the peril is of such proportions that the machinery of law is an actual obstacle in dealing with it, then a single ruler must be appointed who can reduce all law to silence and temporarily suspend the sovereign authority.... It is obvious that the People's first concern must be to see that the State shall not perish. Thus, the suspension of legal authority does not imply its abolition.

Jacques Maritain generalises the Legislator-Dictator argument: "It is in period of crisis, birth, or basic transformation that the role of the inspired servants, the prophets of the people, takes on full importance."[7]

This is a somewhat limiting doctrine since it views leadership as an emergency function, to come to an end once the state is established or saved.

YET, even within these limits, how can one know? How can one be sure whether a heroic constitutional leader might not use his exceptional authority to abolish the constitution? How can one be sure that the Legislator will content himself with the giving of the laws and will not seize power to serve his own interests? that the Dictator will turn back the authority confided him? that the suspension of legal authority does not imply its abolition?

There is no guaranteed answer to any of these questions. But one can perhaps suggest certain things to watch which might enable a society to judge whether strong leadership is being employed to establish democracy or to establish itself.

Here the situation differs as between old and new nations. In a country with functioning representative institutions, the contraction of individual rights and freedoms is justified only under the direst necessity. While the executive should wield all his powers under the constitution with energy, he should not be able to abrogate the constitution except in face of war, revolution, or economic chaos. If crisis can be met no other way, it must be met that way; but his extraordinary authority must be confined to what is necessary to meet the crisis, and, once the crisis is met, then that extraordinary authority must disappear. Above all, the assumption of exceptional powers must not be made too easy: provisions like Article 48 in the Weimar constitution can become an invitation to dictatorship (which is not to suggest, of course, that the absence of Article 48 would have prevented Hitler from coming to power). Even if the power of the national parliament is diminished for the duration of the crisis, parliament should continue to sit, to watch, and to register its views. Great Britain or the United States in wartime suggest that this temporary devolution of power can take place without permanent harm to democratic institutions.[8]

The problem of the new countries is more complex. For what makes short-run authoritarianism possible in Britain and the United

[7] Maritain, *Man and the State*, p. 140.

[8] For a thoughtful discussion see Clinton Rossiter, *Constitutional Dictatorship*.

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States is precisely the strength of the antecedent tradition of liberty. Such nations can risk an interlude of crisis because the great preponderance of national values and institutions can be relied on to require reversion once the crisis is over. A nation without an antecedent tradition of liberty is obviously far more vulnerable to the encroachments of tyranny. In such countries, therefore, one must examine rigorously and vigilantly both the *ideology* and the *acts* of the leadership.

The Ends of Ideology

IDEOLOGY includes both the explicit commitments of the régime and the values implied by its performance. If the avowed philosophy of the régime, for example, is purposefully authoritarian, if the régime takes every opportunity to decry democracy, individual freedom, and free institutions, then there seems little hope that its ultimate impact may be democratic. Of course, pro-democratic slogans are no guarantee of pro-democratic actions; yet an ideology which explicitly identifies itself, however nominally, with values of law and of individual freedom and dignity may plant seeds which could ultimately ripen among the people into demands that the régime honour its public professions.

The question of implicit ideology revolves around the relationship between the leader and his people. A leader can embody democratic or totalitarian values in his personal style. The essence of the totalitarian leader is the demand for absolute obedience. He regards the members of his society as means to an end, and the end his own aggrandisement and glorification. The democratic leader, on the other hand, must strive to regard the members of his society as ends in themselves. Their compliance with his proposals should come, not through fear or through faith, but through free and rational choice. "The instructed few may not be safe leaders," said Woodrow Wilson, "except in so far as they have communicated their instruction to the many, except in so far as they have transmuted their thought into a common, a popular thought.... The dynamics of [democratic] leadership lie in persuasion." Persuasion—not manipulation; or, as Maritain puts it, "The question is: are the people to be *awakened* or to be *used*?"[9] The emergence of a cult of personality, for example, is an obvious danger sign. The first rule of democracy is to distrust all leaders who begin to believe their own publicity.

One way in certain instances to reduce the chances of personal tyranny is to vest power not in an individual but in a party. This may seem a frail hope in a century when parties have shown themselves as cruel and implacable—and far longer-lived—than individuals. Yet the broadly-based party or coalition of parties may become a means by which a wide variety of people find opportunity for and access to power within an ostensibly authoritarian society. The example of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* in Mexico is instructive. The PRI was the party of the Mexican Revolution; for all practical purposes, it remains to-day the only political party in Mexico. Yet Mexico as a nation has gradually acquired free institutions and individual liberties. These include the liberties of political opposition. But the opposition parties never get anywhere; somehow the major interests in society have found satisfactory representation within the PRI itself. The Congress Party in India seems to be playing a comparable role. For nations which need stability as well as freedom, the solution of a loose and capacious "central" party may offer the best hope. To those, like myself, who believe a two-party system offers far better guarantees of freedom, this solution will not be adequate. Yet we would all be more than happy if the new nations all enjoyed the measure of freedom which exists under this system in Mexico or India. Every nation has to work out forms of freedom consistent with its own culture and conditions.

The ideology of the régime, both explicit and implicit, is thus of first importance. The acts of the régime, of course, are almost as important. "When societies first come to birth," said Montesquieu, "it is the leaders who produce the institutions of the republic. Later, it is the institutions which produce the leaders." A régime genuinely desirous of moving in a democratic direction will concentrate on developing appropriate institutions. It will increase both the quantity and the quality of education. It will work for an equitable distribution of income and rising mass living standards. It will demand the emancipation of women and children. It will encourage a free and honest press. It will train public administrators. It will eliminate graft and corruption. It will pull men of talent and vigour from every class of the population into the governing process. It will begin to offset

[9] Woodrow Wilson, *Leaders of Men*, pp. 41–2, 59; Maritain, *Man and the State*, p. 142.

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the executive power by building responsible and representative governmental institutions, starting with a national legislature. It will work to establish the supremacy of law and to strengthen the mechanisms of political opposition.

Many of these things, of course, are required by a policy of modernisation, whether the leadership is trying to build a democratic or an authoritarian régime. That is why, in the end, the question of ideology has its special significance. For in spite of the determinists, whether Weberians or Marxists, the modern high-technology society will probably not generate a determinate and uniform political structure. It will probably assume a variety of political forms and support a variety of political institutions. Because this is so, it means that a nation will retain a certain freedom of choice. That freedom is, of course, severely limited by the traditions of the nation, by its economic and strategic situation, and by manifold other circumstances. Yet a precious margin remains for human decision.

THE future remains indeterminate. Heroic leadership can lead towards democracy or away from it—depending on what the leader does with his power, and what his people permit or encourage him to do. What is plainly required is a reconstruction of democratic theory to enable us to come to terms with the problem of leadership—to enable us to decide which styles of leadership democrats can use and which they must fight. The classical democratic ideology nourishes us all; but, maintained in rigid purity, it has been an abundant source of trouble. By denying positive leadership a role within the democratic frame, it has tied the hands of democratic societies; by discouraging leadership, it has encouraged crisis. As Raymond Aron has said of France, "The Republic was so afraid of great men that it was forced, from time to time, to have recourse to saviours." And the classical ideology has misled people not only about their leaders but about themselves. The citizen in a democracy simply cannot play the role in which the classical philosophy has cast him. In particular, it has assigned him a power and initiative in theory which he cannot achieve in practice; and the consequent gap between expectations and actualities unquestionably contributes to the political frustration and estrangement pervading modern democracies.[10] Political alienation becomes another emotion driving the masses to saviours.

Thus the classical ideology generates frustrations which threaten democracy itself. To escape this, democratic theory must be revised to accept the theoretical insights of Hamilton and Emerson, which means to incorporate the practical experience of all working democracies. An adequate democratic theory will recognise that democracy is not self-executing; that leadership is not the enemy of self-government but the means by which it can be made to work; and that Cæsarism has been more often produced by the failure of weak government than by the success of strong ones. Thurman Arnold once spoke of "the absurd idea that dictatorships are the result of a long series of small seizures of power on the part of a central government." The exact opposite was true: "every dictatorship which we know flowed into power like air into a vacuum because the central government, in the face of a real difficulty, declined to exercise authority." So, too, Plato saw tyranny as the consequence, not of responsible authority, but of anarchy. As democracy itself develops a realistic conception of the indispensable place of leadership in the democratic process—the indispensable role of leadership as witness to man's freedom—it will be in a better position to judge the pretensions of heroic leaders, and it will probably experience far less need for them.

[10] See M. B. Levin, *The Alienated Voter*, a most illuminating study of political alienation in Boston, Massachusetts.

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Nigel Dennis

A Bicycle Built for Two

"THE problem to be faced by a Siamese twin," Arthur would say in his lectures, "is not, as is commonly supposed, his *adherence* to his brother, but his *separateness* from him—a point to which I return again and again." Then, after Arthur, resting one hand on his and Gino's hip, had given examples of how far apart they were: "I think," he would add to his audience (professional men, mostly: doctors, sociologists, an advanced canon or two), "I think this awareness of our separateness came at the very moment when my brother and I became aware of our jointure—which is to say, our recognition of indefeasible bond was simultaneous with that of insuperable apartness."

Now, here we have a statement on which somebody has spent a lot of effort and which sounds not only true, but profoundly true. Yet should we not carry it to the window and examine it carefully, to see if it is not rubbish? We shall never be the sort of philosopher that insists on every word meaning something, because our heart is without the sentimental and religious sweetness necessary to so passionate a faith in the promise of mere words. But we do ask of true statements, and particularly of profoundly-true ones, that they be not more than about 49 per cent inaccurate—and it is with this in mind that we raise the following objections to Arthur's words:

1. Gino and Arthur realised they were joined at the hip when they were three (or, *at most*, four) years old. Could boys of that age have had sufficient intellectual training to conclude that their misfortune was necessarily the opposite of what it was?

2. When Gino and Arthur were three (or, *at most*, four), nobody was talking about "the isolation of the individual" and "the breakdown of communication," etc., etc. Consequently, if each did, in fact, recognise his solitariness at that time, he was thinking what we are thinking now, but doing so nearly twenty-five years before we did. Is this likely?

3. Gino could see, feel, and hear as well as the next man, but he was never "aware" of anything. Even as a grown man, when he heard Arthur mention "isolation" he associated it with measles, while "breakdown of communication" brought to his mind only telegraph wires under snow and confusion in a post-office. If so limited as an adult, what must he have been when three (or, *at most*, four)?

If these arguments stand up, it means that Arthur repeatedly made a misleading statement about his and Gino's condition, and that he did so because he based his conclusions on what was current in the thinking of his maturity, instead of on what had been clearly apparent even in his infancy. And yet, the doctors and sociologists always used to note down that part of his lecture as if it were gospel, coming, as it did, from one who was *in a position to know*. Well, it will be one of our aims here to show that whatever position Arthur was in, he inclined to fancy himself in quite another one. Lucky man! If, for general purposes, there is any *more*-rewarding inclination, we shall be grateful to have its address.

Any discomfort in the situation, really, arose from Arthur's being joined to a person like Gino. For there is no doubt at all that

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Gino was not a thinker's twin. His ruling passions—golf and gambling—turned him into a man of the world and completely stunted his thoughtful side. On a radio programme, yes: Gino could recount correctly, hole for hole, every leading game of golf since 1900; but one knows a dozen historians and haberdashers who can reel off lists like that. Arthur, on the other hand, had rather a short memory: like most thinkers, he identified himself with whatever he happened to be thinking at the moment, supposing it to be an advance on whatever he may have thought before. Other differences between the twins were that Gino, like most sportsmen, had a good eye, a short temper, and a cheery heart, while Arthur was short-sighted and could cope with the problem of being joined at the hip only by bringing his mind heavily to bear on it and acquiring patience by long study of the proper literature. Gino, moreover, did his best to ignore his tie to Arthur; he tried to go through life as if he were exactly the same as any other golfer or gambler. Arthur, however, quite doted on their tie and made it his centre of interest—not in a morbid way, not even in a pleased way, but simply as the platform from which all his trains pulled out. The best way to illustrate the general condition these differences made is to give absurdly exaggerated examples and suppose Leopardi attached permanently to W. G. Grace, or Jung to P. G. Wodehouse. Now, imagine the sharp edges of these bondsmen's characters being rubbed away, yet gently cemented, by years of unsparing propinquity, and the actual situation of Gino and Arthur emerges in rough outline, like bumping ships on a radar screen.

THERE is no doubt at all that the more *likeable* characteristics were Gino's—as can be proved simply by pointing to his numberless hon. memberships in sporting clubs and gaming societies. But this should not prejudice us when judging Arthur. If our culture is to bed down comfortably, then studious patience, painfully developed in libraries, *must* be respected as much as the spontaneous warm-heartedness of the clubhouse. Intense self-interest (in the scholarly sense) *must* be saluted by as many cannons as thoughtless self-forgetfulness, and the arts of the brain, however misused, *must* rate as many salaams as games of skill. If anyone doubts this argument, let him pause to compare the respective burdens of Gino and Arthur. Good-natured Gino must traipse willy-nilly from one lecture-hall to another and let Arthur bore the pants off him with dreary variations on the theme of personal isolation. He must get used to hearing incessant references to the very nuisance he tries hardest to forget; he must attend Lady Beaune's literary "Wednesdays" and learn to go to sleep while Arthur reads with the light on. But patient Arthur must follow Gino into the bunkers and roughs of the world's golf-courses; he must stand in wet paddocks wearing a grey hat, stomach the conversation of club-bars, sit patiently at baccarat tables and tolerate the filling-up of the home mantelpiece with row upon row of silver-plated tournament cups. Personally, we cannot feel so much as a cigarette paper of difference between the respective Crosses listed above, and we believe that if the rest of the world could be as just as we are in such matters, communication would not keep on breaking down.

Now, since we are on the subject of credit, and trying to apportion it in a magnanimous way, let us pitchfork some in the direction of the English people. Let us say that their attitude to Gino and Arthur was extraordinarily nice and sensible, and goes to show that the English way of dealing with what is out of the ordinary is in no way as stringent and churlish as many people complain it is. The twins' courage was recognised long before they came of age: all through their law-suit, as minors, to free themselves from Gammon's Circus, public opinion was on their side and Mr. Gammon was booed, and almost pelted, in the Strand. The ambitiousness of their characters—their near-Scots determination to go far in London—was acclaimed immediately as English: indeed, they got along so well that they soon reached the stage where there was a sort of pause in

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public enthusiasm—as if responsible heads of families were asking each other: "But will they be *modest*, too?" And once Gino and Arthur had shown modesty—Gino, by attributing his first big golfing victory to favourable winds; Arthur, by adopting in his first book a manner so quiet as to be nearly mute—they received unfailingly the treatment that suited them best—which is to say, people shook hands with them, and argued with them, and joked, and offered to stand the next round, etc., etc., precisely as if the two were any separate Britons. Indeed, to drive home the general niceness of English behaviour, let us again exaggerate absurdly and instance the decency of the newspapers. It was not only the excellent *Times* photographers and their matter-of-fact caption writers ("Mr. Gino Fawcett, the holder, playing himself out of a tricky position in the first round of the Tweesdale Cup") that were commendable, but also the papers you find in barbers' shops: these were so self-restrained about the brothers as to be in the position, once a year or so, to write a short editorial eloquently saluting their own silence. This may not seem much of a feat to the man in the street; but to anyone who has been close to the Press and knows that a newspaper proprietor's first ambition is to sell astonishing facts and photographs to the public in order to buy bread for the men and women on his staff, the decency shown to Gino and Arthur must seem so unbusinesslike as to be nearly defective in professional loyalty. But this is a tricky point that always arises when a cultural Prince, forgetting his immediate responsibilities, becomes over-sensitive to the suffering and deformity of persons who are not on his pay-roll.

II

SO, TAKE it all in all, and here is a very happy situation indeed. Two people with one serious disadvantage have won a difficult struggle to fit in and feel a great deal of pride (modest pride) at having done so. The English traffic which, instead of squeezing up has halted and waved the twins in from their curious little secondary road, also feels a great deal of pride (modest pride) at having reached a certain stage of civilised behaviour. We shall now give individual examples of this modest pride; but to save ourselves the trouble of writing "modest" each time, we ask the reader to do the job for us by exciting modest emotions in himself whenever our text makes a reference to pride.

The judge who directed the jury to find against Mr. Gammon still recalls with pride how careful he was to leave them no loophole to the contrary—and, of course, the jurymen will proudly remember forever how readily they swung into line. The National Health authorities take pride in giving Gino and Arthur separate cards for stamping at the self-employed rate; the Marylebone Council is as proud to renew Gino's driving licence (Arthur does not drive) as is the Vestments Insurance Company to renew the annual cover and allow the 30 per cent, no-claim premium bonus. The Press lord can say to himself proudly at night: "Well, even if it has meant giving poor old Joe the sack, my restraint has saved those two stout chaps from pain;" and the good-hearted rozzer who shouts "Good luck, Mr. Fawcett!" as Gino speeds down the Dover Road to the links at Sandwich, feels better and luckier himself, as if he had turned over a sixpence when the young moon rose. There is pride for the brothers' bank manager, who watches their separate balances climb year by year and can claim to have guided these two brave and famous men ever since they left Mr. Gammon. There is the profoundest sort of pride (to which the depth of modesty must be proportionate) for Gino's and Arthur's different sets of friends—the sporting ones, who tolerantly overlook Gino's peculiar connection with pedantry, and the intellectual ones, who forgive, as purely circumstantial, Arthur's tie-up with a Surrey sort of man. Finally, there is pride for the local tax-collector, who demands just as much from each brother as he does from ordinary brothers—and here lies the key to civilised tact and help for the disabled: they must not be favoured too much, or they will become self-conscious, and then by degrees indignant,

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and all the good undone. So Arthur and Gino are dunned for bills just like everyone else; no club ever gives Gino one inch of privilege in the rules of the game; and the editor who has scribbled a note to *"My Dear Arthur"* asking him to review a new book about communication by some Anglican or Zen man, will always tell him if the review is too long. It is hard to think of any other country that could balance help and self-help so neatly—and perhaps we may remark here, without meaning to be at all insular or patriotic, that had Gino and Arthur grown up in California or Manhattan, they would have been sadly retarded by excessive kindness. More and more young people in America are entering monasteries nowadays, and it seems that they are doing so precisely to find just that lick of roughage which we, in our harsher culture, can enjoy without ever resorting to faith or celibacy.

III

GINO and Arthur are in their late 'thirties and a situation of remarkable balance has been achieved. Each is at one with the oddness of the other, and the English are at one with the oddness of both: three clumsy facts have formed one handsome dream. Nor is it our intention to send the dream-ship to the bottom by overloading it with heavy sentimentalities—*of course*, the situation is not perfect, *of course* there are spats and difficulties and moments of bad temper and resentment; and there are times when tact breaks down and some one of the three parties puts a foot wrong, or over-reaches. But such defects are trifles, for modest pride is carrying the threesome along with remarkable sturdiness and none of them, one would think, is going to go too far wrong if only for fear of losing face—a motive usually attributed to the Japanese. Gino and Arthur have not reached the ultimate state of loving their fate, nor have the English so scoured away their brutishness as not to feel, every now and then, that they are crying *"Ciao!"* to a pair of monsters. On this point we shall only remark impatiently that if the situation, on all sides, *were* that much better, it would be a sign that all three parties were ripe either for sanctity or certification. It is sentimental enough, as we remarked earlier, to expect people always to use the right words; but to expect them always to enjoy the right sentiments is pedantry of the wettest sort.

Instead, the proudly-pitched situation continues through the years, and one can see no reason why it should not see Gino and Arthur safely into their grave, complete with Olympic medals and a Fellowship of All Souls. Unfortunately, one forgets that a well-balanced condition is an awful breeder of sheer boredom and that even the proudest person can become fed-up with his own modesty. The brothers' bank manager, for instance, really does, after so many years, become sated with his own happiness at his own goodness; the Press lord wearies of his magnanimity and even stops running his annual announcement of it. Bar-tenders and policemen actually do reach the stage of hardly noticing the brothers, and the few funny stories that have been invented about them by catty wits have gone the rounds so often that they could not bear repeating even at a large banquet. Now, this sort of boredom is a consequence of highly-civilised behaviour, and it is our personal conviction that people who suffer from it should try their best not to turn disruptive and ugly: if sufferance of boredom is not the *very test* of civilisation, what is? So we lay it down that a boring banquet is a sign of far greater excellence than is an excitable missionary, and, like any savage, we think the latter should be made into the former whenever the peace of the long, dull days is threatened by agitation.

In the present case, it is Arthur, unfortunately, who begins to resent the boredom most. The disease starts slowly and, like hallucinations, is at first dismissed by Arthur as silly, extraneous, and dyspeptic. Then it starts coming back for more. It informs Arthur that his life is dull, partly because he has made it orderly and benevolent, and partly because people don't *notice* him very much. Where once, for example, his lecture-audiences sat bolt upright, drinking Arthur in, they now doodle, and even doze, as if

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Arthur, even with Gino attached, were just another *one* of the many people who make a career out of addressing other people. When he speaks on the radio, no letters pour in: there is only one, from a kindly old lady who has taken twenty years to discover how handicapped Arthur is. When this starts happening, a man knows that society really has opened all its doors to him, and, staring glumly through the empty frames at the drowsy figures beyond, he pines for some heavy obstruction that will take hammer and nails and a manifesto or two.

Unfortunately, this appreciation of the situation—which is a quite ordinary, common one—does not reach Arthur in the clear and meaningful language we have used above. It arrives in code, and when Arthur has unscrambled it, the intelligence reads very differently. "Are you pursuing life with Integrity?" it asks, "and if so, why are you not suffering more?" The message implies that Arthur is a shirker who, having overcome a serious handicap, should now be pursuing a worse one. But this implication is too garbled to be read plainly: Integrity is the only whisper that is always easy to catch, and Arthur wakes up with it in the morning and feels ashamed when the misty London sun shines through the window on to all the good furniture and silver cups. Somewhere in Pimlico, he knows, a young hop-picker is putting on a play named *Integrity*, with a black baby and real hop-poles in it, for two nights and a matinée.

BESIDE Arthur, Gino sleeps on deeply, his hairy, muscular arms outside the bed-clothes, his barrel-chest rising and falling like an efficient buoy. His game is not what it used to be, and a bit of a problem is going to come up over the application he has made to become the resident pro of a Kent club. Gino is at an age when he would enjoy the security of a regular salary; but how can he get the job, with Arthur in tow? So Gino is worried, but not too much, because he knows how decent English committees are and how ready to fix up some compromise when they see that one is necessary. He also takes for granted that one's game falls off as the years pile up; that there is more fat and double-whiskies and a bluer red to the nose. This is such a truthful view of life that integrity has no place in it.

But it is Gino who, quite innocently, gets Arthur started on the new quick-step. Arthur's worry about the growing emptiness of things has been piling up for months; all he needs to get him going is some sort of sign-post, as he has no idea where to find a fuller life. He has been reading books which contain information on this subject and has underlined a good many passages which contain the gist of fullness. But by next morning they have all seemed disappointing: sanctity, it seems, can ring hollow just as quickly as success can. What Arthur needs is a suggestion that will catch his particular imagination: integrity and suffering will follow without much trouble.

The moment comes when they are driving home from one of Gino's tournaments. Gino, rather smelling of whisky, is enjoying himself, as always, with the gear-box of the A.C. and playing the whole tournament over, hole by hole, out loud. The radio is on. Arthur is sitting with the new cup in his lap, bearing with the awful music on the radio and giving a proper grunt every fifteen seconds as Gino rattles on; but of course his brain-box is entirely elsewhere, playing backgammon with integrity. "I often think," says Gino suddenly, laughing, "that my game owes everything to you. An extra body and two more legs—the stability's absolutely terrific, you know."

Arthur grins as well as grunts, but Gino's words trickle into his body and begin to work like fury. His first thought is: Why didn't I think of this myself? In fact, he has thought of things like this for very many years: for instance, he has known for ages that handicaps can be turned into advantages and that his wide reading and almost courtly patience have been built out of the dreadful limitations imposed on him by Nature. But this is the first time that a piece of his theory has had practical Gino to support it, and it is as if what had been a mere thought, rattling about

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with many others in Arthur's skull, like bolts in a cardboard box, had suddenly been hammered into an arrow, all ready to be fired at the lofty target of Integrity. We, ourselves, of course, can think of a dozen targets that are closer to the ground and easier to hit, but that is because we lack the parabolic vision that inspires bowmen of Arthur's sort.

That night, after Gino is asleep, Arthur starts shooting. He decides, to begin with, that the lack of integrity in his life is due to the fact that although he has known the truth, he has refused to follow it. He has coasted along, taking things the easy way, making himself popular, helping society to preen its civilised feathers. He has not told the truth for fear of being thought boastful—and the truth, as he has always known, is that most human beings are a thoroughly ugly and deformed lot. They are to be pitied for this, not punished, because their deformity is not of their making; they were so born into the world, completely detached from one another and quite without what Gino has called "the terrific stability" of Siamese twins. The world of health is thus a world of illusion—and Arthur, who should have been the first to say so, has instead only helped to magnify the illusion. The world of civilised decency, too, is nothing but a corrupt nonsense—just a long, long lie—and one outstanding example comes instantly to Arthur's mind: the dishonest decision against Mr. Gammon. The judge who directed it, sketched the lie; the jury painted it in; the public applauded the finished picture and gave it their varnish. Arthur and Gino have always known that their victory was dishonourable—and they have always thanked the society that gave it to them. Indeed, the grosser the lie, the more thanks they have given. They have thanked the authorities who have pretended that they were separate persons. They have thanked the friends who pretended not to notice. They have reached the stage where they scarcely notice themselves. No wonder civilisation looks like a whopping white lie; no wonder the progressive dramatists are hitting back with black babies.

Arthur sees immediately that he must make contact with reality (this is the way he phrases it) without the least delay. He must announce: "I am what I am—and you are what you are" without fear of pain or unpopularity. He must be brave enough to pull the house down, and, if it lands on his head, this can only bring out the best in him.

THE only nuisance here, is his wretched attachment to Gino. Men who live for the casino and the links detest dismantling operations of any kind: in their way, they are as daring as any thinker, but they like to jump off from a steady position and to recognise old faces and places as they race out and home again. By now, Gino is used to Arthur's intellectual friends; he has even grown to like two or three of them. The thought of lecture-halls still makes him groan, and yet, he has learnt to like some lecture-halls better than others—and even to like some lectures better than others. Being tied to Arthur has given him even more stability than he realises; he has even caught, in a curious way, a certain reflected reputation from his brainy twin. Arthur knows this and realises how enormously difficult it will be to carry Gino into paths of deeper integrity. Indeed, as he is fond of his brother, he decides that rather than hurt him, he had better just suffer from boredom and emptiness after all, leaving the set-up just as it is.

This is a kind, generous decision; but Arthur soon starts making a hash of it. He turns to reading painful books, written by damned people who have been born with no legs, or only grown to a few feet, or with hermaphrodite parts. He has read these books before out of a fellow-feeling for other monstrosities and interest in the ways they have coped with their peculiarities; but now he does so with a feeling—that grows stronger all the time—that these creatures were on to a good thing, that they had something extra, that they knew what integrity was, that their deformity was the truest sort of beauty.

The trouble is that these monstrous predecessors have all reached the same conclusions as Arthur. The health of tuberculosis, the mobilities of paralysis, the

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radiance of having no eyes, the harmonies of total deafness, the fertility of impotence—all these are very old saws by now, and Arthur is not going to increase his integrity much by sawing them again. Is there, then, no way in which he can improve on the earlier tragedians?

Most of the above not only arrives in code, but stays in it. Arthur gets nothing but attractive impulses, which drag him slowly towards a solution. This arrives quite miraculously and *en clair* one evening, when he and Gino are cleaning their teeth. It states:

YOUR TRAGEDY IS UNIQUE. BEING BOUND TO GINO HAS GIVEN YOU SPECIAL ADVANTAGES OF INSIGHT AND WISDOM. BUT YOU CAN NEVER USE THESE ADVANTAGES—BECAUSE YOU ARE BOUND TO GINO.

This is an extraordinary bit of news, and far more exciting than anything Arthur had expected. But as he is still resolved not to hurt Gino's feelings—which would also spoil the whole tragedy—he cannot go feverishly to work and express it all in book form. But he does have one or two close friends to whom he is able to unburden privately, and here are extracts from a couple of letters he writes to them:

My Dear Lady Beaune,

Alas! I fear I can't accept your charming offer of Folly Cottage for September—too far from Deal, where Gino is playing in both the singles and the mixed foursomes. Or, should I say, in strict truth, where *I* am playing in both the singles and the mixed foursomes? Tell me, Boney dear, did any monster ever have so curious a destiny? I long to be a fortress of Bohemia, but must remain a villa, semi-detached. I am beckoned to the solitude of Alps—and must drive to Deal! Ah! What your understanding means . . . *etc.*

Dear Renfrew,

Of course, you are quite right, but consider my side of the question. Here I have spent all my adult life (ever since we got away from Gammon, in fact) stressing my utter *apartness.* Now, I find that this was an illusion. *I am joined to Gino*—and in ways that would never occur to someone who wasn't. For instance, if I shot a policeman, *I* could not be hanged, because *Gino* would be innocent—could anything be more degrading? And the same injustice applies to martyrdom—I must always be denied the gridiron and the Cross, because nobody in his right mind would dream of crucifying the bourgeois Gino. In brief, the norm must always cling to my side—I *cannot* be an *outsider.* To make things worse, I can't make up my mind whether my dilemma is almost unique, or whether destiny has chosen me to symbolise the predicament of *all* thinkers. I mean, is Gino, to me, what the dead weight of public ignorance is to intellectuals in general? And, if so, how can we escape? Suicide, you answer courageously. But there is no suicide for a Siamese twin. If I kill myself, I murder my brother—whose only crime is a preference for golf. . . .

Renfrew, of course, writes a profoundly true letter back, saying that he has often been in much the same sort of pickle himself: if his reply is a bit off-hand, this is only because there is always a little jealousy among tragedians. But Arthur, who knows that his particular wound is deeper than Renfrew's (which is *why* there is always a little jealousy among tragedians) has reached the point where he must do something to break step with normalcy and has decided, as tragedians always do, that his closest friends must be the first to suffer from it. He writes curtly to Lady Beaune, saying that he won't come to her "Wednesdays" any more because he finds the atmosphere of her *salon* "moneyed, insincere, and stifling." In a book-review, he makes a brutally clear reference to poor Renfrew's distressing sexual handicap. Then, widening his field, he suggests in an article that kindnesses shown by civilised people to monstrosities are just a lie invented by these people to hide their own monstrousness. This offends even people who are not his friends.

Gino, of course, knows nothing of the indignation that is provoked by his brother's latest writings: he only knows that instead of going to Beaune House on Wednesday, Arthur takes him to Wapping, and that addicted Chinamen and diseased sailors seem to be taking the place of evenings with Renfrew. Knowing that Arthur's bent has always been rather towards the morbid, good-natured Gino just tags along, drinking a bit more whisky and comforting himself with the thought that this time to-morrow *he* will be dragging *Arthur* to the Players' Annual Dinner at Broadstairs.

BUT, a few mornings later, a letter comes for Gino. He reads it and says nothing, but his face pales and he twists his big fingers.

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Arthur, too, has something on *his* mind, but he, like Gino, says nothing. After breakfast, very silent, the brothers sit down to their desk. Arthur writes letters to a couple of friends, keeping them up-to-date with his wound. Gino studies his racing paper and places a bet or two over the telephone. They rise for lunch. Neither speaks his mind. In the afternoon, Gino finds that none of his horses has come in. Pleading a headache, he opens the whisky bottle. Soon, Gino's whisky gives Arthur courage, and he confesses to Gino that he feels an irresistible impulse to go to a circus that evening.

The brothers have their worst quarrel for years. Both have been patrons of the Free Captive Animals Association ever since they left Mr. Gammon: to many, the mere mention of the name "Fawcett" suggests the beastliness of the sawdust ring and the whip of the unspeakable tamer. How can poor, stupid Gino understand that his brother has reached the stage where the nastiest thing imaginable seems, after all, to be the most honourable and most beautiful? What's more, Gino has drunk half a bottle of whisky, and Arthur, suddenly observing him closely, realises that his low-brow twin is in a bad way. He asks why—and Gino goes off like a geyser.

He tells Arthur that he is losing his eye. His game is falling off. All his bets have begun to go wrong. He has been drawing on his capital. The letter that came this morning said that the job at the Kent club had been given to someone else. The letter confirms his fears: he is going downhill and can't stop.

Arthur is quite astounded. If there is one thing he had never imagined, it is that brainlessness has its own instabilities and perversities and cannot be relied on to play the part of Plain Jane while better minds are starring in grand tragedy. Now, he looks at the face beside him and wonders how on earth he never noticed the baleful signs of sportsman's puffiness and gamester's eye. He is dreadfully alarmed (how Lady Beaune would laugh!) by Gino's reference to spending capital; he asks for more details, but Gino only pours himself another shot and dries up. Now, Arthur's old patience reappears and he talks sensibly and consolingly to Gino. He says that at forty, things often seem to be going hopelessly wrong. He recites with a show of pride all Gino's recent successes on the links and at the tables, and by the time he has finished they are pretty good friends again. Nothing more is said about going to the circus, of course. Arthur just puts Gino to bed and, to the accompaniment of his drunken wheezing, writes a letter to Renfrew: he has written a whole page before he remembers that Renfrew will never speak to him again.

Three days later, Arthur is addressing a group of Swiss social workers who are visiting London. Suddenly, his words are interrupted by a loud snore. Gino has fallen asleep. He must be woken up, before Arthur can go on. Even the Swiss are embarrassed by this. Afterwards, Arthur is not invited to Zürich.

Next day, Gino is playing in a tournament at Southampton. Because he has a hangover, he fails to turn up on time, disappointing a large crowd. Amid loud boos, Gino marches into the club-house and starts talking in a loud voice. He speaks sarcastically of the Secretary, a non-player. Then he impugns the Treasurer's probity, and finally, starts boasting about his own feats on the course. Arthur is tapped politely on the shoulder and asked to take Gino away.

A week later, much the same thing happens all over again. But this time, Gino makes matters much worse by exceeding the speed-limit all the way home. A constable stops him at Barnes. His breath is smelt. He is booked. The magistrate says: "You were the idol of hundreds of handicapped young people. You have betrayed the trust that society reposed in you. I shall have to disqualify you for six months."

The newspapers, bitter as only betrayed newspapers can be, break silence and report the whole case. TWIN BETRAYS TRUST, they say. Photographs are taken, showing Gino and Arthur leaving Barnes Magistrates' Court. After one glance at them, three clubs, two in Lancashire and one in Carmarthenshire, strike Gino off their hon. membership rolls.

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The judge who freed the twins from Mr. Gammon sets his lips hard and drops his paper on the cat. Renfrew goes about telling people that Arthur is the criminal and Gino perfectly innocent (he has letters to prove it). Lady Beaune tells reporters that she has never seen Arthur in her life. Suddenly, London is full of disappointed policemen, barking at innocent people.

All this results in dreadful quarrels between the brothers. Gino starts shaving sporadically, so Arthur must appear on platforms accompanied by a hairy oaf. His speaking-appointments fall off. One night, Gino gets so drunk that Arthur, who is not strong, has to carry him home. It is while doing so that Arthur sees clearly what his fate is. Far from being joined inseparably to the norm, he is having to support the sub-norm. When he looks back on his earlier conclusions, they seem contrived, even dishonest. Tragedy—real tragedy—is not a conclusion at all. It is what happens.

The one advantage of this situation is that since Gino is no longer an innocent good fellow, Arthur need not have regard for his feelings and may speak his own mind frankly on the subject of corrupted civilisation, varnished dishonesty, and so on. Unfortunately, they are both becoming so unpopular that Arthur has fewer and fewer opportunities of speaking at all. He has talked for years about "the breakdown of communication." Now, he realises that this means being unable to talk about it.

At Michaelmas, comes their most terrible quarrel. The matter of rent comes up, and Gino confesses that he hasn't a penny in the bank. It's the old story, of course—the small losses piling up, the growing worry, the sudden attempt to recoup everything-and-more in one stupendous bet. Neither brother has shaved, both are furious; they glare into each other's faces shouting horrible insults. Gino pours out twenty years of hatred for Arthur's diseased, pale-faced, self-centred, stinking, intellectual world; Arthur, more poised and surgical, caricatures acidly Gino's brainless, muscle-bound, pink-faced partners in sport. At this, Gino takes Arthur by the throat and shakes him: Arthur's loud cry is quite drowned by Gino's awful bellowing. The door-bell rings at this moment, but both brothers ignore it: Gino is out to murder Arthur, and Arthur, alive to strangulation's tragical advantages, is only too ready to die. But when the ring is repeated, both brothers become irresolute. Gino slackens his grip. Arthur fights for breath. Then, without a word, they pull their clothes into some sort of order, go to the door, open it, and put their hairy faces to the crack. Who knows? Perhaps some golf-club needs a pro? Perhaps some body needs a lecture?

IV

But it is only Mr. Gammon. The astonished brothers step back two paces—and Mr. Gammon slips inside easily, like a tamer into a cage of beasts. His hair, all golden when he stood in the witness-box, is silver now; but otherwise he is just the same, dressed in a grey suit and wearing socks with clocks. His face is marked with the old quiet, humorous amiability, and yet, it is still the firmish face of one who must deal daily with midgets, trick-cyclists, elephant-boys, sword-swallowers, and conjurers—and as he filters across the room, a low, consoling run of words issues from his mouth in a musical murmur, like a smiling fountain in a little court. Finding himself a chair, and standing up his polished brief-case with well-groomed fingers, Mr. Gammon bubbles on—a shocking intrusion, he knows, but after so long, such a pleasure!—oh, how often he has wanted to tell them how admiringly he has followed their lives—himself, of course, neither a golfer nor a thinker, only a sort of family man with lots of dependents—hence, doubtless, the feeling he has had recently that this might *just* be a time when he could be of help in a very small way to two persons whom he has always remembered with profound affection (all this without pausing for breath). That the world has its ups and downs, Mr. Gammon (continuing) does not doubt; yet *he* has nothing to complain of—these are good times, as good as any he can remember—and who but a fool would com-

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plain of good times?—and yet, he has known some to do so, and by no means fools at that, as if good times were somehow deplorable or dangerous—but never mind! is he not digressing, when what he *really* wants to say is *how* right they were to strike out on their own twenty years ago—ah! would that then he had had the better judgment and flexibility which he has since (he hopes) developed!—oh! what suffering and discord are bred by hard-handedness!—well, well, well, those old days are over now, and only the lady-acrobats remain a problem that he will go to his grave without mastering. Do they remember Sylvia and Cynthia?—why no, why should they?—really, he must not reminisce—he must say *why* he has intruded on his old friends so rudely—and if he may do so in a roundabout way, may he say that the modern circus is changed amazingly from the old-fashioned one they knew? It has a cleanliness, a polish, an ease, a stream-lined look and way-of-life that would have horrified his father but is perfectly in tune with the times. And there, alas! is Mr. Gammon's very problem. He has the advanced, progressive ideas—but where is he to find ladies and gentlemen who can practise them? It is not enough to set a smart top-hat on a tamer's head and a polished whip in his hand—it is the man himself that must exude the elegant, accomplished air—and Mr. Gammon, dropping his white fingers, strokes the clocks of his socks and draws his second breath. Ah! he knows it is useless to ask the brothers if they could put him in the way of one or two up-to-date recruits—and yet, and yet, they are both men of the world, both at the top of the tree, each in his own way—oh! to put it bluntly, which one *must* do eventually, what would Mr. Gammon not give to have the two of them in his troupe again!—and he immediately states how much he would give (it is a lot of money) and then, looking very serious, says what an immense boon to the public the brothers' return would be. For it is not enough, to-day, Mr. Gammon explains, for people merely to *read* the works of great intellects like Arthur, or even to see and hear them on a professional platform—what they want is to see, in natural surroundings and close up, the very temples of the master-mind, the beats of the feeling heart in its search for compassion, even the pain on the lined forehead when it runs into disaster or disgrace: this is a *personal* age. As for a man like Gino, who has made a glorious name in a glorious sport, oh! could the public ask more than to see that skill displayed close-up—that mature, ineffable skill of the body which the man-in-the-street loves best of all?

AT THIS point, Mr. Gammon suddenly stops speaking and stares deep into Gino's eyes as one absorbed in a vision: this is an old trick of his, with animals. His trance lasts fifteen seconds, and at the end of it, not having been scratched to pieces by either brother, Mr. Gammon opens his brief-case and whips out a glossy folder: it shows a large, modern caravan, resembling a comfortable little house. This would be their home—and now Mr. Gammon starts talking briskly again, repeating the salary he mentioned before, stressing the long vacations and the easy hours—and, by the way, have they a debt or two unpaid?—pray, leave that to me—complete privacy assured them, of course, out of working hours and all refreshments on the house (a most tactful way of saying that Gino will not want for whisky, nor Mr. Gammon for control of the consumption of it). Finally, Mr. Gammon says he simply *won't* pretend that there are *no* disadvantages, *no* embarrassments involved—there *are*, as in every job. The nuisance of this particular job is due simply to the special temper of nowadays, which every circus must take into account. He means, he explains, that in everyday life, the normal person is beginning to feel that he cannot compete with the deformed and the abnormal, and must become more like them if he is to hold his own in the rat-race. Now, says Mr. Gammon (rather triumphantly), a circus already *has* all the abnormality and deformity imaginable—and thus, *its* function is to show monstrosity struggling to behave normally—the very opposite of what is going on outside. To give an example: in his father's day, an unfrocked

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parson was exhibited naked in a circus barrel: but to-day, the same unfortunate would be painstakingly dressed-up in his full canonicals and shown conducting a normal "service" in a normal "church" as if there were nothing odd about him at all—and the audience, of course, would become his "congregation." So, the attraction of Gino and Arthur would be, like the parson's, their affectation of ordinariness—the public will see them dressed very correctly, talking very correctly, doing a little punting or putting very correctly, and lecturing very correctly—all, in fact, as if the two were perfectly ordinary people. Personally, Mr. Gammon would pay a very big bonus indeed for special acts that would drive home this point: for instance, Gino and Arthur might invite Mr. and Mrs. Clump, the midgets, to cocktails with them, and all four would drink and discuss politics as if there were nothing the matter with them. But never mind!—this sort of thing is just a showman's dream—just a perfectionist's fancy (though the bonus is real enough)—what matters is that Mr. Gammon happens to have a provisional contract with him—keep it as long as you like, he insists—and only binding for one year—after that, who knows?

It is Gino, thinking only of the steady salary and the whisky, who signs first. But Arthur, the great tragedian, is not slow to draw his pen.

V

AT THE beginning of this story, we gave credit to all the people who seemed to deserve some—largely because the narrative-line needed it, but partly because we wanted to put ourselves in the clear and not be found wanting in the compassion which is so much demanded of authors nowadays, if not of lorry-drivers or Members of Parliament. Now, we should like to end this story in the same mood of generosity, and we can think of no better way of doing so than to hand out another little dole of credit—this time, to Mr. Gammon.

Here is a man who was treated incredibly shabbily twenty years ago by two very important members of his circus, who ruthlessly broke the long-term contract entered into by their parents. When Mr. Gammon stood up for his rights, both judge and jury swung into action against him, while the public howled and screamed at him in the streets. It would mark most of us for life; but it has had no effect on Mr. Gammon at all. Unlike the sporting fraternity, the bank manager, the Press lord, Lady Beaune, the Barnes magistrate, and numerous policemen and responsible heads of families, Mr. Gammon has never once uttered the word "betrayal," never so much as suggested that his trust was repaid with ingratitude. Where the so-called civilised world have turned their backs in sulky disappointment, Mr. Gammon, forgiving and forgetting, has returned to the scene when he was most needed, offering the only practical solution to a very ugly problem. And let it not be argued that he himself stands to gain by stepping in: to how many would we be able to apportion a dole of credit, if we were first to demand a means-test?

We are inclined, therefore, to conclude that men like Mr. Gammon really understand the nature of our times much better than the rest of us do and can deal with their more awkward manifestations more patiently and tolerantly than we can. Let us, then, put aside our indignations and prejudices, and give him our hand, as Gammon's Circus moves off to the north with Gino and Arthur—departing, amusingly enough, on the very evening that *Integrity*, after drawing packed houses in Pimlico, opens to a blaze of jewels in the West End.

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John Strachey

The Strangled Cry

IV. Russia

THE culminating expression of the literature under discussion has come out of Russia itself. In Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago* we hear again the characteristic strangled cry. How could it be otherwise when the work could not be published in its own country, the manuscript was probably in danger, and the book had to be smuggled abroad in equivocal circumstances?

The apparition of this Russian novel of the classical tradition, escaping from the Soviet Union of the nineteen-fifties, has made an extraordinary impression upon the world. Not that this has been an advantage; on the contrary, the passions, prejudices, and vulgar propaganda which these events have aroused in the West have done nothing but harm to the book. They have obscured the message which it sought to send to us, and confused judgment upon its merits.

For that matter it is none of my business to discuss the book's literary quality: it has been over-discussed already. As to that an opinion may be quoted rather than asserted. Mr. Edmund Wilson, perhaps the most authoritative critic now using the English language, has written: "*Dr. Zhivago* will, I believe, come to stand as one of the great events in man's literary and moral history."

One could hardly put it higher than that! But it would be hasty to conclude that Wilson is necessarily wrong. Such a book has a hundred aspects, with many of which these pages have no concern. Indeed, *Dr. Zhivago* contains relatively little overt criticism either of rationalism in general or Communism in particular. It is a positive book; it is an assertion, almost a celebration. "In it," Wilson writes: "positive values —Christianity and love and art—are presented with such overwhelming power that the barbarities against which they must assert themselves seem lacking in long-range importance." The trinity of values is broadly conceived. It is not only love, in the sense of the passion of a man and woman for each other, but the whole skein of personal relations, which is celebrated. It is a mysterious, unnamed something, the creativeness of which is fleetingly revealed in art, rather than art itself, which is extolled. And it is religion, in the form of the Christianity of the Greek Orthodox Church, but yet religion as an historical phenomenon, which is worshipped. There is bitter criticism of 20th-century values, Communist and Capitalist alike, in all this; but it emerges only incidentally, and, so to say unavoidably. It emerges because 20th-century thought and feeling have disastrously disregarded the things which Pasternak believed to be above all important. It is not his fault if his assertion becomes a condemnation.

IN ONE of its aspects *Zhivago* is a simple love story, as straightforward and tragic as *Romeo and Juliet* or *Anna Karenina*. As in a million other such stories, the hero and heroine, Yury and Lara, meet, love, are parted, suffer, come together again, and are finally destroyed by remorseless fate. What has this sort of thing to do with the reaction against a rationalistic view of the world? Yury and Lara could have loved and lost anywhere, at any time. At the heart of the conflict which racks them is a private situation; it is simply that they are each married to other people, whom both of them also love; in this respect their tragedy could have happened in Bayswater as easily as in Siberia.

Nevertheless, the love story in *Zhivago* is, from the Russian Government's—and most other governments'—point of view, profoundly subversive. It is subversive in the sense that Julia's

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love of Winston Smith was subversive. Of course no one would have worried if Pasternak had just told us that some character of his called Yury was in love with another character called Lara. Such statements are fully permissible even on the standards of the Union of Soviet Writers. But Pasternak has done a great deal more than that. He has somehow conveyed to us the force of their love: he has shown its intolerant power in action. And that was not easily to be forgiven him, for he has asserted that this relationship is in some respects more important than anything else: more important perhaps—and here was his blasphemy—than "the revolution" itself. This part of the book is a hymn to "weeping anarchic Aphrodite." The political, or rather anti-political, impact of the book will be lost unless the force of the love story is recalled.

AT THE CLIMAX of the book, Lara and Yury become acutely threatened by the revolution. In a desperate purge before the introduction of the N.E.P., the local Communist authorities are rounding up everybody who might be expected to be nonconformist, whether in fact they are or not, all people with questionable pasts, ex-bourgeois and the like. Lara, because her husband (though he has been a famous Red Commissar) has by now been himself purged and is on the run, and Yury because he is so far from being a Communist, are in particular danger. Knowing it is really no good—in order to take advantage of their remaining days in their own way, in order to use them up "saying good-bye to life"—they go to hide in an abandoned, half-ruined house in the Siberian countryside. It is deep winter. They are together there with Lara's little girl for less than three weeks. At this point two of the book's main themes, namely the exaltation of physical creation by love, and of æsthetic creation by, in this case, poetry, come together and fuse. Wilson has written that this chapter is "like nothing else in the whole of fiction." They feel ecstasy in being together in isolation. The fearfully hard manual work they have to do to survive in the abandoned house in the Siberian winter is sanctified.

> In the rush of some task or other their hands would meet and join and then they set down whatever they were carrying, weak and giddy, all thoughts driven from their heads. And the moments went by until it was late and, horrified, they both remembered that Katya had been left on her own much too long or that the horse was unwatered and unfed, and rushed off, conscience-stricken, to make up for lost time and make good what they had left undone.

(It must be recalled that we are hearing Pasternak's voice muffled and confused by translation.* For example, Wilson writes that the Russian of this last sentence is far richer—"the minutes run into hours." One may sympathise with the translators in their almost insuperable task but one may also mourn this immense impoverishment of language. The impact of the work in Russian must be of a different order of magnitude.)

And now Yury's other passion, his passion for æsthetic creation, takes possession of him with a grip more ferocious even than his passion for Lara. He sits alone far into the night writing poetry in a way more absorbed than ever before or after. In all this ecstasy, desperation, and grinding physical work by day, "his greatest torment was his impatience for the night, his longing so to express his anguish that others should weep."

The themes intersect. The writer's instinct to communicate so "that others should weep" takes priority. There follows a consummate description of the poetic process itself. For an instant, in the beleaguered house, the flame of creation in both its forms has towered up. We are made to feel that such a force must be omnipotent: that its action although "no stronger than a flower" will indeed "raise the wreckful siege of battering days." Then Yury, disturbed by a strange sound, looks out of the window:

> He was dazzled by the white flame playing on the shadowless, moonlit snow, and could at first see nothing. Then the long, whimpering, deep-bellied baying sounded again, muffled by the distance, and he noticed four long shadows, no thicker than pencil strokes, on the edge of the snow-field just beyond the gully.
>
> The wolves stood in a row, their heads raised and their muzzles pointing towards the house, baying at the moon or at its silver reflection on the windows.

All we can say is that those four pencil strokes have now been indelibly drawn upon the sheet of world literature. The miracle of black ink has had its might. In one of the ways that is possible, immortality, which, Pasternak writes, is "only a stronger word for life," has asserted itself against death and corruption.

BUT IN THE WORLD of things the wolves immediately close in. In Pasternak's scrupulously un-

* See Manya Harari, ENCOUNTER, May, 1959, and Edmund Wilson's reply, ENCOUNTER, June, 1959.

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extenuating narrative, Yury and Lara are parted, separately crushed and degraded, and their dead bodies thrown upon the garbage heap. Yury gets back to Moscow only to go to seed, "gradually losing his knowledge and skill as a doctor and a writer," to die pointlessly of a worn-out heart muscle in a broken-down Moscow tram. Lara's fate is worse. After the most subtle agonies that Pasternak can devise for her, she is still "a casually beautiful woman," still capable of rising to the heights of poetic and emotional imagination. She gets back to Moscow in time to attend Yury's funeral. She is invited by Yury's half-brother, who is a high Communist functionary, but who has appreciated him, to help edit the poems he has left. Then Pasternak makes one of his few violent (although still oblique) comments upon the régime. He kills his marvellous heroine, exquisite and strong, on whom he has lavished his creative powers, in two dreadful, icy, off-hand sentences:

> One day Lara went out and did not come back. She must have been arrested in the street, as so often happened in those days, and she died or vanished somewhere, forgotten as a nameless number on a list which later was mislaid, in one of the innumerable mixed or women's concentration camps in the north.

THIS relentless picture of the degradation and destruction of Yury and Lara's kind of people by war and revolution raises the issue of whether or not the Yurys and Laras were, after all, feeble sentimentalists—were, to use the inimitable English schoolboy's expression, "dripping wet." This indeed is what the Russian literary officials reiterate.

There are, surely, two things to say about that. In the first place it is perfectly true that men possessed of the highest creative powers are unusually vulnerable. A man simply cannot have it both ways: if he possesses the immensely heightened sensibilities of a poet, he cannot be as hard as nails at the same time. It is quite true that Yury was "too soft" to survive intact the First World War, the two revolutions, the famine, and the three years' civil war. If he had not been he could not possibly have been the incarnation of the creative process. No one can give birth while clad in armour.

On the other hand, for us in the West to accuse Yury of being "a weakling" is to make ourselves ridiculous. Are we pretending that we possess the physical toughness to go through a tenth of what Yury went through before he cracked? After all, he was a thoroughly efficient doctor who served in the First World War, was wounded, took part in local administration during the February Revolution, went back to his hospital job in Moscow, stuck to it through the October Revolution when most of his colleagues refused to go on working, survived two Moscow winters of famine, had typhus, got his family out to Siberia, survived two years in the Siberian *tayga* as the medical officer of the Partisans, and walked back to Moscow through the starving countryside. Are we then to rise sternly from our desks in our centrally-heated rooms and accuse him of weakness?

The really staggering thing is how a Yury can have survived as long as he did. And of course when we ask that question we are really asking the question of how Pasternak survived. We do not know enough of the facts to be able to answer, but we may be sure that his survival could not have been accomplished without both an immense initial vitality and without extraordinary resilience, skill, and flexibility. Of the initial vitality I can, as it happens, bear witness.

I met Pasternak at a Writers Congress in Paris some twenty-five years ago. I knew no more of him than that he was a famous Russian poet, and I could not really communicate with him across the language barrier. But I have never forgotten the sense of incomparable aliveness in the man. He was possessed with immortality in his sense of "only a stronger word for life." Of his survival through the darkest times of all in the nineteen-thirties little is, I think, known. There is one anecdote. In one of the very worst years an English visitor to Moscow is said to have somehow got hold of his telephone number and rung him up. Pasternak replied: "Oh, but my dear fellow, didn't you know? I died some years ago." All we can say is that by some extraordinary grace, this most vulnerable and most provocative of the creative minds of Russia lived on right through it all, into the nineteen-sixties; and just before he died sent us his genius.

"PERSONAL relations for ever and ever," as E. M. Forster extolled them: even personal relations raised to the point of passionate love, are far indeed from being Pasternak's be-all and end-all. We saw that at the very climax of his passion, it was not for Lara that Yury could hardly contain his impatience for the night: it was for his desk! One of the things which Pasternak's whole book extols as an ultimate value in life is æsthetic creation. This whole

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aspect of his book is highly relevant to our theme.

Pasternak makes only one or two overt statements on the subject of æsthetics:

> I have always thought that art is not a category, not a realm in which there are innumerable concepts and varied phenomena, but that, on the contrary, it is something concentrated, strictly limited. It is a principle which comes into every work of art, a force applied to it and a truth worked out in it. And I have never seen it as a form but rather as a hidden, secret part of content. All this is as clear to me as daylight. I feel it in every bone of my body, but it's terribly difficult to express or to define it.

> A work of art can appeal to us in all sorts of ways—by its theme, subject, situations, characters. But above all it appeals to us by the presence in it of art. One is much more shaken by the presence of art in *Crime and Punishment* than by Raskolnikov's crime.

> There is no plurality in art. Primitive art, the art of Egypt, Greece, our own—it is all, I think, one and the same art throughout, an art which remains itself through thousands of years. You can call it an idea, a statement about life, so all-embracing that it can't be split up into separate words; and if there is so much as a particle of it in any work which includes other things as well, it outweighs all the other ingredients in significance and turns out to be the essence, the heart and soul of the work.

Pasternak does not know, any more than anyone else does, what this "it" is. But at the crisis of the book he comes nearer to giving an insight into the process of æsthetic creation than perhaps anyone else has succeeded in doing. In a passage which has already become famous he describes how Yury felt (just before he saw the wolves) when he really got going that night in the beleaguered house:

> After two or three stanzas and several images by which he was himself astonished, his work took possession of him and he experienced the approach of what is called inspiration. At such moments the correlation of the forces controlling the artist is, as it were, stood on its head. The ascendancy is no longer with the artist or the state of mind which he is trying to express, but with language, his instrument of expression. Language, the home and dwelling of beauty and meaning, itself begins to think and speak for man and turns wholly into music, not in the sense of outward, audible sounds, but by virtue of the power and momentum of its inward flow. Then, like the current of a mighty river polishing stones and turning wheels by its very movement the flow of speech creates in passing, by the force of its own laws, rhyme and rhythm and countless other forms and formations, still more important and until now undiscovered, unconsidered, and unnamed.
>
> At such moments Yury felt that the main part of his work was not being done by him but by something which was above him and controlling him; the thought and poetry of the world as it was at that moment and as it would be in the future. He was controlled by the next step it was to take in the order of its historical development; and he felt himself to be only the pretext and the pivot setting it in motion.

It will be seen that the process of inspiration is quite unmystically described. There is nothing supernatural "above him and controlling him:" it is "the thought and poetry of the world as it was at that moment and as it would be in the future." He *was* "the next step it was to take in the order of its historical development." Again, it is interesting to notice that this passage is not only highly dialectical but echoes a specifically Marxist concept. Just as Marx said that the Hegelian dialectic was standing on its head and that he had turned it right side up, so Pasternak says that in the most intense moments of creation, the correlation of forces controlling the artist is stood on its head: language, the mere instrument of expression, becomes the originating force, and makes the poet its instrument. Pasternak, steeped in Hegelianism at Marburg under Professor Cohen was, whether he liked it or not, the co-heir of Marx in this whole way of thinking.

There are not many other passages in the book which discuss æsthetic creation. But there are a hundred which exemplify it. The book is saturated with nature poetry, and it ends, uniquely, in a series of poems. These are almost inaccessible to us in translation, but we can faintly glimpse their indispensability to the text. In this specifically æsthetic aspect of the book, Pasternak is surely saying the same thing as he is saying in his love story. He is saying that if you think that either personal relations or æsthetic creation are all very well in their way, but that just now you haven't time for such frills; that you're too busy waging the class war, or making money, or winning national wars, or running an empire, and things of that sort, well so be it. Only at the end of the day you will make the unpleasant discovery that life is not worth living. No one knows why—at any rate no one can put it into so many words—but these things are aspects of the point and purpose of life. Take them away and nothing is left.

FOR PASTERNAK, physical creation through love and æsthetic creation through art are subsumed in the religious conception of the

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resurrection. Scattered through the book, yet an integral part of it, are a whole series of passages which if they were brought together would give us Pasternak's cosmology, or his theology if one prefers to call it so. Indeed art, love, and religion are for Pasternak barely separable concepts. "Art," he writes, "has two constant, unending preoccupations: it is always meditating upon death and it is always thereby creating life." Thus the whole book is in many respects an uninterrupted meditation upon death and resurrection. Love is the resurrection of the body. Art is the resurrection of the spirit. The agonies and disasters of his characters, their moments of glory and creation, are all, in one of their aspects, incidents in a parable of death and resurrection.

This is for Pasternak the central aspect of religion. But he describes also a whole religious view of history, or as it can equally well be called, an historical view of religion. At the very beginning of the book Yury's uncle Kolya, who is his main intellectual influence, explains his religious position:

> As I was saying, one must be true to Christ. I'll explain. What you don't understand is that it is possible to be an atheist, it is possible not to know if God exists or why he should, and yet to believe that man does not live in a state of nature but in history, and that history as we know it now began with Christ, it was founded by Him on the Gospels. Now what is history? Its beginning is that of the centuries of systematic work devoted to the solution of the enigma of death, so that death itself may eventually be overcome. That is why people write symphonies, and why they discover mathematical infinity and electro-magnetic waves. Now, you can't advance in this direction without a certain upsurge of spirit. You can't make such discoveries without spiritual equipment, and for this, everything necessary has been given us in the Gospels. What is it? Firstly the love of one's neighbour—the supreme form of living energy. Once it fills the heart of man it has to overflow and spend itself. And secondly, the two concepts which are the main part of the make-up of modern man—without them he is inconceivable—the ideas of free personality and of life regarded as sacrifice. Mind you, all this is still quite new.

At the start then, love and art, and for that matter science, are tied up in a bundle labelled religion. (In this passage it is labelled "The Christian Religion," which will sound rather parochial to many an Indian, Chinese, or Japanese reader.) Pasternak believed, so far as I can see, in a completely unsupernatural religion —if that is not a contradiction in terms. The atheist, Uncle Kolya says, can be a perfectly good Christian, if he recognises that the Gospels made the basic ethical discovery upon which everything else hangs. Pasternak's religion, while saturated with the poetry, the ritual, the forms of communication, of the Greek Orthodox Church, which he loved, seems to be at bottom, an ethical doctrine, unmystical, untranscendental.

This impression is confirmed by what Uncle Kolya goes on to say. Christianity to him is essentially an enlargement, an intensification of man's consciousness. He goes so far as to declare that before Christianity there was "no history." This seems to be a sort of religious equivalent to Engel's view that everything so far has been social pre-history: that human history proper will only begin with socialism, when man makes his "leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom." Uncle Kolya says that the classical world was all

> blood and beastliness and cruelty and pock-marked Caligulas untroubled by the suspicion that any man who enslaved others is inevitably second-rate . . . heavy spokeless wheels, eyes sunk in fat, bestialism, double chins, illiterate emperors, fish fed on the flesh of learned slaves. Beastliness convoluted in a triple knot like guts. There were more people in the world than there have ever been since, all crammed into the passages of the Coliseum and all wretched.
>
> And then into this tasteless heap of gold and marble, He came, light-footed and clothed in light, with his marked humanity, his deliberate Galilean provincialism, and from that moment there were neither gods nor peoples, there was only man—man the carpenter, man the ploughman, man the shepherd with his flock of sheep at sunset whose name does not sound in the least proud [Reference to Gorky's famous saying, "Man whose name has so proud a sound."] but who is sung in lullabies and portrayed in picture galleries the world over.

It is marvellous stuff, but is it true? No doubt you *can* interpret the message of the Gospels, as Pasternak does here, simply as humanism: as a sort of extreme, mystical, anarchic individualism, which is intolerant of all social groups: of nation, of class, of anything outside the supreme individual. (Pasternak makes it clear in other passages that this is indeed his meaning.) But the Gospels have not always been so interpreted, to put it mildly. Again, can this extreme contrast between the Christian and pre-Christian world really be sustained? Could not some of Uncle Kolya's denunciations of the Roman Imperial court apply just as well to the courts of, say, the Renaissance Popes? It may be replied that after Christ there was always an ideal to be betrayed,

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while before him there was "no suspicion" that there was anything wrong with beastliness. But that ignores the existence of all the great pre-Christian and non-Christian moralists, prophets, philosophers, teachers, and artists. Pasternak's strictures on the courts of the Roman emperors do not apply very well to the great centuries of Athens, to say the least of it! Socrates and Sophocles, Pythagoras and Pheidias, Pericles and Thucydides and, in Asia, Confucius and Buddha, Lao Tze and Asoka, have all clean disappeared from his history of humanity! This is surely downright naïve? Even if we can agree that there has been an advance in ethical standards over the last two millennia, it must surely be attributed not only to Christianity, but to each of the higher religions, and for that matter to all the major philosophers, teachers, and exemplars of mankind. And when we have admitted that, have we not come pretty near saying that there has been, over the millennia, an all-round process of development, of which the creation of higher ethical standards is a part and an expression? Can it be denied, for instance, that the abolition of, say, chattel slavery, accompanying and made possible by the rise in productive technique, has been a part of that development? And when we have said that, are we not back quite close to that view of universal history which Pasternak so dislikes?

Pasternak's religion must be judged, of course, not by this or that example, but from the book as a whole, since the book is in one way an enormous parable. It may be too soon to attempt that. But I have the impression that in spite of all his peculiarities and historical naïveties, we have here a religious statement much richer than other such contemporary attempts. It is a statement full of all the Byzantine mysticism of the Greek Church, yet it appears to be in essence simply a particular view of universal history: a view independent of supernaturalism or of authoritarian revelation. It is therefore in no ultimate conflict with inductive reason. Pasternak is simply putting up a great warning sign to contemporary reason that there are still whole vast areas of human life—the essential areas at that—which cannot be fruitfully approached by any rationalism which is not much more humble and cautious, and so, much more truly scientific, than heretofore. But Pasternak does not specifically assert that these areas of consciousness can *never* be approached empirically and rationally. And unless and until a writer does that he has not joined the retreat from reason.

WHAT does all this come to politically? The priority of the love of human beings for each other, of æsthetic creation, and of religious meditation are each asserted, as Wilson says, with immense power. In a sense this triple assertion *is* Pasternak's political programme. For good or ill, however (but no doubt inevitably), he has by no means left it at that. The book has a whole specifically political, or, if you will, anti-political aspect, and it is this aspect about which there has been all the trouble. What the Soviet authorities could not stand, I suspect, was that Pasternak's attitude to them (although not to the revolution) is simply contemptuous. Is this contempt justified?

For the revolution itself, even in its second Communist aspect, Pasternak has comprehension, although not acceptance. He makes Pasha —Lara's husband—at the very climax of the book, when Pasha comes in flight to the beleaguered house, a few hours after Yury and Lara have been parted, and a few hours before Pasha shoots himself to evade his Chekist pursuers—he makes Pasha attack Yury for his reactionary attitudes. He explains how Lara, who in youth had been seduced by a rich lawyer, was for him the symbol of everything that was being outraged, trampled upon, degraded by capitalism—"you could indict the century in her name, out of her mouth. It was no trifling matter, you must agree." Yury replies: "How well you speak of her. I too saw her in those days, just as you have described her . . . I still remember her. . . ."

Pasha: "You saw and you remembered? And what did you do about it?" It is the fierce Communist accusation against the monumental complacency of the world: against the feebleness, as it seems to them, of all the Yurys who deplore and do nothing.

At the time Yury merely answers: "That's another story altogether."

But Pasternak's answer in the book as a whole is, I suppose, Simone Weil's answer to the same question: "It is better to fail than to succeed in doing harm." Pasha and the Bolsheviks were splendidly virile, effective, robust, compared to the rest of us. But "life is not as simple as to cross a field." (A Russian proverb quoted by Pasternak in one of his poems.) A little less vigour, and a little more insight might have got them further in the end; on the whole they have probably done a little worse, even, than our apparently so ineffective and muddled democracies.

But Pasha rushes on to give a magnificent speech on what the revolution has meant to him:

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> Yes. Well. So you see, the whole of this nineteenth century—its revolutions in Paris, its generations of Russian emigrants starting with Herzen, its assassinations of Tsars, some only plotted, others carried out, the whole of the workers' movements of the world, the whole of Marxism in the parliaments and universities of Europe, the whole of this new system of ideas with its novelty, the swiftness of its conclusions, its irony, and its pitiless remedies invented in the name pity —all of this was absorbed into Lenin, to be expressed and personified by him and to fall upon the old world as retribution for its deeds.
>
> And side by side with him there arose before the eyes of the world the immeasurably vast figure of Russia, bursting into flames like a light of redemption for all the sorrow and misfortunes of mankind. But why do I tell you all this? To you it must be so much empty noise. . . .

(Incidentally the last sentence hits off perfectly the Communist's maddening assumption that no one but he has the faintest clue to what everything is about. Yury-Pasternak, who has thought about all this, up, down, and sideways, a thousand times, is told that it must be so much empty noise to him.) Nevertheless the passage as a whole shows a commanding realisation of the grandeur of the Russian event. After this, and after several other important passages in the book (for instance, Yury's thrilled reaction to the first Bolshevik proclamations on the seizure of power: "... what splendid surgery! You take a knife and you cut out all the old stinking sores. . . .") it is merely silly to say that Pasternak never understood the revolution. The whole gravity of his offence to his government is that he understood it and has rejected it.

That rejection is, however, in many respects a measured one. It seems to have been widely overlooked that Lara is made on balance to accept the revolution, while Yury on balance rejects it. Lara says that she accepts the revolution because she saw much more poverty in her youth than he did:

> I mustn't let myself be influenced by your way of looking at things. You and I don't really think alike. There is something intangible, marginal, we both understand and feel in the same way. But on the wide issues, in our philosophy of life, it's better for us to stay on different sides.

There is subtlety in this recognition that what matters between two people politically is usually not *which side* they come down on, which with intelligent people must be a question of balance, of "on the whole." What really matters is *the way* in which they champion this or that political cause, attitude, or party. Any politically experienced person knows that he will know people with whom he has much in common on the other side, and people with whom he has not much in common on his own side. But that does not mean that he will not work wholeheartedly with *all* the people on his own side or that he will not work wholeheartedly against *all* the people on the other side. For this is the way in which politics must be conducted, the only way in which, out of their dialectic, a workable system of governing a country can emerge.

Perhaps it was not only the fact that Yury-Pasternak comes down against the revolution which proved so galling to the Soviet authorities when they received the manuscript of *Zhivago*. It may have been even more *the way* in which the rejection was put. In the course of the above conversation between Yury and Lara, which takes place when they first meet again in Siberia after several years of separation, Lara notices his changing attitude. He replies that, yes, he has changed: in all this time something definite should have been achieved. "Why haven't the Communists done better? It's because they haven't any real capacities, they are ungifted." Probably they minded that comment a good deal more than if they had been vulgarly and foolishly denounced as robbers and murderers. After all, in war, revolution and civil war, we are all robbers and murderers; such terms lose their meaning. But it is depressing to be shown to be ungifted robbers and murderers. For then it is all for nothing.

THE Communists, of course, have a comprehensive answer to all this. For them Pasternak's, or anyone else's, "rejection of the revolution," when it is not simply a disguised way of fighting for the counter-revolution—that they understand—is simply irrelevant and ridiculous. They see the revolution as an absolute historical necessity. The sufferings it inflicted on the Russian people, the damage it did to Russian civilisation, are simply the price that had to be paid for survival into a new epoch of human development. In so far as there is any point in blaming anyone for performing their inevitable historical role in such events, the entire blame for all the suffering and social damage lies on those who resisted the revolution or failed wholeheartedly to support it. Pasternak, in their scheme of things, is just a sentimentalist, whining about the necessities of the historical epoch into which he was born.

History, however, has shown that this is an insufficient answer. *A* revolution was no doubt

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indispensable in Russia. But the full Communist theory of class-war-to-a-finish, as the sole reality of social life, has proved to have been a monomania. Pasternak is doing an immense service to the Russians of the mid-20th century by reasserting the truth, that men and women are not *only* workers, peasants, intellectuals, capitalists, or aristocrats, but also men and women. Is not this becoming "the truth"—becoming, that is to say, the relevant, needed, appropriate approach —for Russia also—with every year that passes? While any claim that Russia is, on balance, more classless than the West can hardly be sustained, yet what can be said of Russia is that there, as in the West, the general merging and melting of classes is taking place. Therefore the Communist theory of total class conflict will become less and less relevant. The Russians will inevitably wake up to find that what matters to them are, precisely, Pasternak's "values:" that their happiness or misery is being determined by their personal relations, their æsthetic powers, and their religious capacity, rather than by their class relations.

THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE in the book to which the Soviet authorities were bound to object intensely. And that is, not its anti-Communism, but the contempt for politics of any kind which Pasternak sometimes, though not always, expresses. It is true that in some passages there is a recognition of the practical achievements of the revolution: but even in them there is a total dismissal of the philosophy on which it is founded. For example, Sima, a religious friend of Lara's, is made to say:

> In everything to do with the care of the workers, the protection of the mother, the struggle against the power of money, our revolutionary era is a wonderful era of new, lasting, permanent achievements. But as to its interpretation of life and the philosophy of happiness which it preaches—it's simply impossible to believe that it is meant to be taken seriously, it's such a comical remnant of the past.

Moreover, more often than not even this tribute to the practical aims and achievements of the revolution is left out. Yury attacks Marxism to an endlessly kind and good Communist, who goes to infinite trouble to help him:

> Marxism a science? Well, it's taking a risk to say the least, to argue about that with a man one hardly knows, but all the same Marxism is not sufficiently master of itself to be a science. Science is more balanced. You talk about Marxism and objectivity. I don't know of any teaching more self-centred and further from the facts than Marxism. Ordinarily, people are anxious to test their theories in practice, to learn from experience, but those who wield power are so anxious to establish the myth of their own infallibility that they turn their back on truth as squarely as they can. Politics mean nothing to me. I don't like people who are indifferent to the truth.

There are two objections to this. First, although the criticism of the rigidity of the Communists is fully justified, yet it is a *non sequitur* to say that this proves that Marxism is not a science. You might as well say that Einstein's demonstrations that physical theory up till then had been false, in the sense that it did not cover all the facts, proved that physics was not science. Marxism is an *attempt* at a social science. It is a very early attempt, and in the hundred years which it has now existed it has already been shown that it cannot cover some very important social facts. But the trouble is that no one has come along and given us a comprehensive hypothesis which *can* cover all the social facts, and until someone has done that we had better be very careful about calling Marxism unscientific. So it may be, but it is not nearly so unscientific as an incoherent jumble of social prejudices without any guiding hypothesis of any kind; and *that* is only too often the only possession of the critics of Marxism.

Second, if politics really mean nothing to Yury-Pasternak, then it is a pity that he writes about them at all! And this is an issue which Pasternak never faces. He never faces the fact that "anti-politicism" is simply the politics of social despair. Again and again he writes as if decent, sensitive, cultivated men and women should have nothing to do with this dirty business. With respect, this is a vulgar attitude. We are familiar with it all over the world. It is as if the crew of a ship in a storm suddenly remarked that navigation and seamanship generally were a very boring, wet, cold, and disagreeable business, which should be given up immediately. Ships, however, do not sail themselves, and the sole effect of the crew going on strike is to hand her over to the first gang of toughs who come along. They will sail her all right: but they will sail her entirely in their own interests. The crew will soon be working again, but not for themselves.

Even the well-known speech of Yury on "the re-shaping of life" seems to me open to this criticism:

> When I hear people speak of re-shaping life it makes me lose my self-control and I fall into despair.

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> Re-shaping life! People who can say that have never understood a thing about life—they have never felt its breath, its heart—however much they have seen or done. They look on it as a lump of raw material which needs to be processed by them, to be ennobled by their touch. But life is never a material, a substance to be moulded. If you want to know, life is the principle of self-renewal, it is constantly renewing and re-making and changing and transfiguring itself, it is infinitely beyond your or my theories about it.

Well, admittedly the Communist attempt at the re-shaping of life has proved extremely crude. But life—social life—does not just go on automatically "renewing and re-making and changing and transfiguring itself." Someone or other, representing some social, economic, or political interest, is constantly re-shaping it whether we like it or not. If we do not attempt to do the job consciously then it will be done unconsciously, and totally without regard for us. It is the glory, as well as the guilt, of the Communists that they attempted to re-shape social life consciously. They did it so badly that the results have been worse instead of better, on the whole, than the results of our Western semi-conscious, piecemeal, empirical efforts. But that does not alter the fact that the supreme challenge to the human race to-day is precisely to achieve a far higher degree of consciousness in the inevitable process of the continual re-shaping of social life.

AT THE VERY END of the book Lara is made to say the same thing, in the midst of her exquisite lament over Yury's bier,

> The riddle of life, the riddle of death, the beauty of genius, the beauty of loving—that, yes, that we understood. As for such petty trifles as re-shaping the world—these things, no thank you, they are not for us.

This is exceedingly arrogant! To achieve a tolerable social system which will allow geniuses such as "Yury-Pasternak-Lara" to live, love, and create is not a petty trifle. The work may be too rough for them, but they really need not scoff at the honest journeymen who attempt it.

It will be seen that on this issue of "anti-politicism" which I understood was, unofficially at least, the Soviet authorities' greatest objection to the book, my opinion is that those authorities were right and Pasternak wrong. Moreover, the concern of the Russian authorities on this issue is understandable. "Anti-politicism" is an old Russian disease, to which the intelligentsia have always been prone. Dostoevsky is its other spokesman of genius. It is the strangled cry of the Russian people, when their government seems to them too hopelessly evil to have anything to do with. It is the inevitable result of the lack, alike under the Tsars and the Communists, of institutions by means of which the people, or even the politically conscious section of the people, can influence their government. It is the result of the gulf which has always stretched in Russia between the Government and the governed. It is understandable that the Soviet authorities should have been dismayed when the first spontaneous, enormously powerful, work which came to them after the relaxation of the censorship turned out to be supercharged with this tendency.

It should be needless to say that this is no justification for the Soviet authorities' suppression of the book. On the contrary, it is pitiable that this vast, apparently omnipotent government, monopolising the means of expression, has cowered back in terror before one man with a pen. Of course they ought to have published *Zhivago* and then stood up for themselves against it like men. For against what they perhaps most fear in it, namely Pasternak's "anti-politicism," they have a convincing answer. Moreover, it is an answer which would allow them to by-pass all Pasternak's other accusations. Even if they were driven to admit them all, they would still be a thousand times right to contend that, however bad they were and are, the more, not the less urgent it is that the Russian people should participate in political life. It was Lenin himself who said that the object of the revolution was to enable every cook to take part in the government of Russia. Why on earth haven't the Soviet authorities the guts to publish *Zhivago* and to answer it with arguments from their own classics, instead of making the pitiful pretence that the book would "interest no one in Russia?" No doubt the true reason for the members of the Russian literary establishment behaving like poltroons before the phenomenon of *Zhivago*, is that to Pasternak's other accusations they have no reply. Or rather they have a reply, and one which has much practical force; but it has implications so humiliating to themselves as to be unusable. In the face of the book's description of the dreadful consequences for, above all, the ordinary Russian people, of fighting out the class war to a finish, they can say nothing—except that all that is over and done with now. It is not an elevated plea, but it is a familiar one:

> *"Thou hast committed . . ."*
> *"Fornication? But that was in another country: And besides, the wench is dead."*

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It was not in another country, but it was a good many years ago now. Some of it was forty years, some of it twenty years, ago. Did it kill "the wench?" If by the wench we understand the Russian people, then of course it did not kill them. This massive and marvellous race survived, and will survive, as one of the very great peoples of the earth. But if we mean by "the wench" the poetry and genius—the Yury-Lara element—in the Russian people, then we must answer that we do not yet know whether that has been killed or no. For a time it seemed that it had been. And if now, and as by a miracle, the moral and æsthetic genius of Russia seems to have been resurrected, that is partly because of the heroic survival of Boris Pasternak until he had written his book.

V. Quarrelling with History

THERE they are, the colossi, the giant powers. They seem almost omnipotent and yet, because they suppose themselves to be antithetical, they are almost powerless, stalemated in a balance of mutual terror.

There is something moving about these two huge communities, each so unfitted to rule the world, which yet each feel that they must How will it end? It might end any day, of course, in a full-scale thermo-nuclear exchange—1,500 missiles in the megaton range each way, and that would be that. But on the whole, "the nuclear ending" seems decreasingly probable. At any rate it is necessary to assume that it is improbable, or all speculation—and everything else for that matter—becomes futile.

THERE IS SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY about the contemporary British relationship to America and to Russia respectively. On the level of daily life we know America a thousand times the better. Without barrier of language, with a hundred interlacing ties between our economies; with large-scale, long-continued migration from Britain to America; with frequent and free intermarriage; with political systems which are different enough to be mutually interesting, but which, when compared to a party dictatorship, are fundamentally similar, we are not quite foreign countries to each other. True, our very nearness produces intense friction: the degree of mutual irritation frequently rises to remarkable heights. British jealousy, American *hubris*, the memory of past wars, a thousand things, makes this a relationship as restless as it is close.

But close the relationship is, whether we like it or not. You may measure its closeness by a simple contemporary test. No one in Britain, not even the most anti-American Britons—especially them, for otherwise they would not care to indulge their feelings so freely—is frightened of America. And that is a remarkable thing. For after all, the American Strategic Air Force could render the British Isles totally unhabitable any afternoon, with only a chance of relatively minor retaliation on the United States; and it is a new thing for the British to live completely within the power of a foreign government. But the fact is that none of us gives the matter a thought! We quite simply know that the Americans will not do it. They are not quite a foreign government to us, at least in this crucial respect. There is no way of proving that we are right. But the mere fact that we really are not frightened of them probably means that we *are* right. For if you are genuinely unfrightened of someone, you can usually get along with him in one way or another.

Compared to all this, Russia is for us still in many ways a *terra incognita*. Her language is too difficult, her national traditions too strange, the intercourse between us too slight, her political system and her conduct too alarming for, one would have thought, there to be any comparison in the intimacy of our relationship. And yet there is one factor to be put upon the other side. Many people may say that it is too slender even to mention in the same breath with the solid ties which unite us with America; but this may be a hasty judgment. This counterbalancing factor is simply the works of the great Russian novelists. Every educated Briton has read Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Chekhov, and now Pasternak. By means of the genius of these "master storytellers, master moralists" (Edmund Wilson) we know what the Russians are like; we actually know them better in many respects than we know even our personal friends in America. The Russians have found interpreters more eloquent than any the world has known. Thus there is a respect in which we in Britain are undeniably closer to the Russians than to the Americans, for we see in the classic Russian literary tradition a flowering of the culture of all Europe.

IT MAY BE OBJECTED that this tradition no longer corresponds to any living reality in present-day Russia. Was not Pasternak, in particular, writing of an extinct race, battered to death by the terrible forty years since the revolution? Paster-

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nak's own view on this desperate question appears to be undecided. On the one hand, he ends his novel with the agonising fable of Yury's and Lara's abandoned child, Tanya. He declares, both through this fable, and in so many words, that everything has been coarsened and debased.

After Yury and Lara have been parted, Lara bears a child to him while she is wandering with her protector and ex-seducer in the Far Eastern emigration. During these wanderings, the child, Tanya, gets abandoned and is brought up by some Siberian peasants. After a ghastly episode of robbery and murder, she has to fly from the house and become one of the child vagrants who roamed Russia in those years. However she is from time to time put into "homes," given a little elementary education and, during the Second World War, turns up as a regimental laundress. Here two of Yury's old friends, and his mysterious half-brother, Yevgraf, now a Soviet general, both hear her story and recognise who she is. She is a nice, tough, simple sort of girl: she has become the sort of girl she has had to become to survive such a childhood. After hearing her story, one of Yury's surviving friends comments:

> This has happened several times in the course of history. A thing which has been conceived in a lofty, ideal manner becomes coarse and material. Thus Rome came out of Greece and the Russian Revolution came out of the Russian enlightenment. Take that line of Blok's, *"We, the children of Russia's terrible years:"* you can see the difference of period at once. In his time, when he said it, he meant it figuratively, metaphorically. The children were not children, but the sons, the heirs of the intelligentsia, and the terrors were not terrible, but apocalyptic; that's quite different. Now the figurative has become literal, children are children and the terrors are terrible. There you have the difference.

This is Pasternak at his most remorselessly realistic. If you break society to pieces, so that, in particular, half the next generation are dragged up without homes or parents, the price is an immense debasement. The child of the marvellous Yury and Lara is merely poor Tanya. But this is not Pasternak's last word. "Five or ten years later," the surviving friends are reading one of Yury's books:

> Although the enlightenment and liberation which had been expected to come after the war had not come with victory, a presage of freedom was in the air throughout these post-war years, and it was their only historical meaning.
>
> To the two ageing friends sitting by the window it seemed that this freedom of the spirit was there, that on that evening the future had become almost tangible in the streets below, and that they had themselves entered that future and would, from now on, be part of it.

Pasternak is no doubt identifying himself particularly closely with Yury in these passages. He is really writing about his own survival and the survival of his book. He is thinking about the possibility of it reaching the Russian people. He wonders, no doubt, whether it will be suppressed by the government, but more anxiously still he wonders whether the forty terrible years may have rendered the Russians unable to hear such a message as his. But he was hopeful, I think, on both counts.

Nor does it seem that his hopes need be unjustified. On the first and simpler issue of whether the Russian Government will in fact be able to keep *Zhivago* from the Russian people, the evidence seems encouraging. Informed observers who have recently been in Russia report that in the circles of the now rapidly growing educated classes in Russia, "everyone" is talking of the book. Moreover, "everyone" is claiming to have read it, or parts of it. For it is in clandestine circulation, in whole or in part, by means of an ingenious method which it is more discreet to refrain from mentioning. It is "the done thing" to have read, or at least to claim to have read, it, and that is surely extremely significant.

Nor do the risks and penalties seem to be particularly grave. Khrushchev's Russia is evidently a genuinely different place from Stalin's. No doubt Stalin's degree of totalitarianism could have effectively suppressed the book and would probably have physically destroyed Pasternak for writing it and for publishing it abroad. There is no denying the terrible efficacy of suppression and persecution pushed through to their logical conclusion. But once, for any reason, suppression and persecution are modified and moderated: once a limit is set to them, they become ineffective. Then they may actually become self-defeating by awaking an irresistible appetite for the forbidden fruit.

But is there still in existence a Russian public which can understand and appreciate *Zhivago*? The evidence of an intense interest in a forbidden book is in itself inconclusive. It may be argued that if the Russian Government had had the nerve to publish a legal edition of *Zhivago*, the book would have proved to be too far from anything which the present generation of

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Russians had ever heard of to make any impact. A generation of "Tanyas" could not be expected to make much of Yury and Lara, even if they were their own mothers and fathers. And indeed so well-informed a Sovietologist as Mr. Wolfgang Leonard, himself a graduate of the Lenin School, takes the view that *Zhivago* is too far from anything which the young Communist students in the advanced party academics have ever heard of for them to be able to make head or tail of it. Again Mr. Isaac Deutscher has called Pasternak "a voice from the dead." For the more highly-conditioned members of the present Russian generation this may be so, but will it prove so for either the earlier or the coming generation? A voice from the dead may speak with tongues to the new-born. *Rex quondam, Rex futurus*. Moreover the opinions of such highly-trained ex-Communists as Mr. Leonard and Mr. Deutscher do not prove that there is not deep appreciation of *Zhivago* even amongst the present generation of Russians. After all the graduates of the party schools are a very small proportion of the educated classes in present-day Russia. The rest of these classes have no doubt been fairly severely conditioned: but not to the same extent. It seems possible to believe that Edmund Wilson was right when he ended his review of *Zhivago* with these words:

> As for his [Pasternak's] enemies in his fatherland I predict that the children, over their vodka and tea, will be talking about the relations between Larissa Fyodorovich (Lara) and Pasha and Yury Andreyevich, as their parents, as I don't doubt they themselves, have talked about Tatiana and Lensky and Eugene Onegin, and Natasha and Prince Andre and Pierre.

If Wilson is wrong, and there no longer exists in Russia a generation capable of hearing Pasternak's voice, then the prognosis for their society, and so for the world, must be grave. Not all their physics, their "years of economic triumph," their military might, their rising standard of life, will, unfortunately, avail them in the end. They may annex the barren moon and probe the galaxies for all I know: they may produce "fantastic" weapons and terrorise the world: they may "overtake and surpass" America in production, so that Ivan has ten times as many television sets and motor cars and refrigerators as he can use, while Sam has only twice as many. It will not be enough. But if Wilson is right, it will mean that one man, possessed of a courage and pertinacity of the rarest kind, has preserved across the forty years those things which give meaning to life.

IT WOULD be wrong indeed to suggest that it is particularly in Russia that Pasternak should be heeded. In many respects his old-fashioned warning that neglect of the unseen things leads only to dust and disaster, is more needed for us in the West than for Russia. A materialism, more crass than Russia's, because unilluminated by Communism's messianic faith, menaces above all the more successful Western societies, such as America and Britain. It would be ignorant and arrogant in the extreme to suggest that Britain, in particular, was exempt from this menace. In some ways she is especially vulnerable to it. Nevertheless there is one respect in which we British may perhaps presume to preach: and that is to preach against the unification of preaching. It is perhaps a fair claim that we in Britain value especially highly the spontaneous individual dissenting opinion: that we value it even when it seems to be manifestly mistaken: that we value spontaneity for its own sake and even when it leads to opinions which seem to have little relation to reality.

For Britain is the traditional land of dissent: of dissent not only in its original religious connotation but of dissent itself: of—if you will—dissent for dissent's sake. In this respect there seems a persisting difference between the mental climates of Britain on the one hand, and Russia and America on the other. It has been well said that both Russia and America are "unanimous countries." The consensus of opinion at any one time is so strong in each of them that it is difficult indeed for an individual to swim against it. For Russia this is well shown by the letter sent by the editors of *Novy Mir*, a "highbrow" literary magazine, to Pasternak rejecting the manuscript of *Zhivago*.* It is quite an able, careful, and well-reasoned letter, but its essential sense could have been expressed in two of its sentences. The first is: "The spirit of your novel is that of non-acceptance of the socialist revolution." There follow several thousand words establishing this proposition, which, for that matter, a backward child of ten could find out for himself by glancing through the book. And then comes the conclusion:

> As people whose standpoint is diametrically opposite to yours, we, naturally, believe that the

* The full text is printed in Mr. Edward Crankshaw's *Khrushchev's Russia* (Penguin, 1959).

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publication of your novel in the columns of this magazine *Novy Mir* is out of the question.

It is as simple as that. The idea that it might be useful, forty years after, to hear a dissenting voice does not so much as enter their heads! There is something both barbarous and panicky about the persistence of such attitudes. When will the Russian authorities get the self-assurance to be civilised?

THERE IS SOME FORCE in the accusation that the relative mildness of the enforcement of the American consensus is merely a reflection of its overwhelming power, so that there is no need of relatively clumsy compulsions. But what, it may be objected, is wrong with such an, in a sense, voluntary consensus? If a consensus is self-enforced by a vociferous, but yet genuinely spontaneous, unanimity of opinion what need is there to leave room for dissent? What is wrong with a genuinely voluntary unanimity? There is only one thing wrong with it, and that is that it will be sure to be wrong. All experience shows that any such universally held, unchallenged, social dogma will almost certainly be erroneous, in the sense that it will fail to correspond with objective reality. Even if it does not so fail to begin with, it will do so sooner rather than later, for objective social reality will be changing all the time, while the social dogma will remain frozen.

It is for this reason that social dissent, especially, has a value of its own and for itself: that it has a value even when the dissenting opinion appears to almost all of us to be manifestly foolish. The first half of our century has taught us—if it has taught us anything—that we are simply not competent to tell with any high degree of certainty which social opinions are valid and which are not. Therefore a heavy responsibility lies upon anyone who attempts, whether by physical persecution, or by the subtler, but in some respects more deadly, method of monopolising the means of expression, to stamp out a dissenting opinion no matter how apparently foolish. For the foolish opinion has the daunting habit of reappearing, in the next phase of social development, as a precious clue to social reality. If we suppress it we may well commit the suicidal sin of what Pasternak calls "quarrelling with history."

WHEN LARA IS TELLING YURY how much she loves her husband Pasha and why, in spite of that love, their marriage has been a failure, she says of him: "He sulked at the course of events. He quarrelled with history." How many others, as well as poor Pasha, have in our day "quarrelled with history?" Whole nations, whole classes, to say nothing of political parties, groups, sects, and individual thinkers have each and all quarrelled with history. They have all adopted ideas, systems, ideologies, social standpoints which, in the event, have proved to be disastrously out of touch with the real course of development.

First, the old governing classes of Europe quarrelled with history when they blocked social reform before the First World War. And then, between the wars, the governing classes failed everywhere to see that they must, as a minimum, prevent mass unemployment, slump, and economic chaos. Next, in the 'thirties, the Fascists and their allies were far more horribly wrong still. The Fascists grasped, it is true, that "the contradictions of capitalism" were fairly readily solvable by means of central control and planning without social ownership. That was so; but in their case this piece of economic, or social, insight merely gave them the power necessary for an attempt to conquer the world by playing upon the most primitive, odious, and degraded aspects of human nature. They never dreamt that by such outrages they would rouse an almost universal resistance, which duly crushed them.

Or again, the British Conservatives in the nineteen-thirties supposed that they had only to sit tight in total selfishness in order to survive; and thereby took their country to within an ace of destruction. And then after the second war we socialists, in Britain and elsewhere, supposed that we had only to enunciate the not very profound platitudes of our creed to inherit the government of our countries. It was not so. And now we may confidently predict that the American conservatives, who suppose that the tawdry, trivial, ideal of personal self-enrichment will suffice for a great people, will sooner or later be similarly disillusioned.

Finally, the Communists who are sure that they have put history into their pockets, have again and again quarrelled with the course of events. Marxism attempts to use the historical experience of the race as "a guide to action." That is its glory. Unfortunately that has not prevented its uncritical disciples from getting the whole phasing and timing of the process disastrously wrong. They were wrong, for example, in thinking that capitalism was producing the ever-increasing misery of the masses; in thinking that the break-up of world imperialism must

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cripple the major capitalisms; and, gravest of all, they were wrong in their appreciation of Fascism. They disastrously underrated Fascism, in one respect, and equally disastrously overrated it in another. For while Fascism by no means turned out to be, as the Communists confidently predicted, an immediately self-contradictory aberration which would be impotent to resolve the economic crisis, yet, on the other hand the Communists grossly overrated the *generality* of Fascism. They taught that Fascism was not an Italian or German phenomenon. They taught that Fascism was the inevitable political form which every decaying capitalism must adopt if it were not overthrown in good time: that Fascism *was* the politics of last-stage capitalism. Seeing capitalism as a more or less unified world system, the Communists thought, and think, of the guilt of Fascism as resting not upon the German or Italian capitalists alone but upon all capitalist societies everywhere. Regarding the distinction between the different nations as of secondary importance, they see capitalist development culminating inevitably in Fascism, and contrast it with development in the socialist world culminating, as they fervently believe, in Communism.

History, however, has taken another and more devious course. It did not turn out to be true that every capitalist society, when apparently trapped by the "closing in from all sides" (to recall Chambers' phrase) of economic crisis would turn to the Fascist "way out." The great slump drove Germany into Fascism, but it drove America into the New Deal and it drove Britain towards social democracy. Fascism turned out to be merely *one* of the "ways out" towards which a capitalism might turn when struck by crisis: there was also a liberal and a social democratic "way out." And each "way out" was practicable.

Who, then, has not "quarrelled with history?" Everyone has been proved wrong, or is in the process of being proved wrong. No one has got hold of more than a bit of the truth. The best that anyone has been able to do is to contribute something necessary and useful. But no sooner have they done so than it has become apparent that their creed was one-sided and had to be superseded to make room for other, and equally one-sided, ideas. After such an experience, how *can* anyone imagine that they know it all and have the right to suppress, by either the hard or the soft method, a contrary opinion? How *can* anyone any longer doubt the immense value of, precisely dissent? For any real, genuine, spontaneously held personal opinion *may*, for all we know, contain the grain of truth without which we are all doomed.

In Lara's speech which has just been quoted, there occurs Pasternak's well-known protest against all mechanical unanimity:

> The great misfortune, the root of all the evil to come, was the loss of faith in the value of personal opinions. People imagined that it was out-of-date to follow their own moral sense, that they must all sing the same tune in chorus, and live by other people's notions, the notions which were being crammed down everybody's throat. And there arose the power of the glittering phrase, first Tsarist, then revolutionary.

It is perhaps in respect of the valuation of scepticism, empiricism, and so of personal dissent, at their true worth that the British tradition (with all its marked inferiority in some respects: its flatness, its mediocrity, its lack of inspiration) may be worthy of attention.

VI. The End of the Reaction

Zhivago completes, and at the same time transcends, the reaction against mechanical, or "mechanistic," materialism. Pasternak triumphantly demonstrates that analogies, conscious or unconscious, between the working of a machine and the springs of action of a human being are hopelessly misleading. The complexities are of a different order. And, since we have still no means of direct description, let alone of measurement, of these complexities, the crucial aspects of human life remain mysterious to us. They can be approached by the older, much less direct, methods of æscetic, ethical, and religious experience alone.

As a matter of fact there is a large element in all this that *should* be acceptable to minds educated in the Marxist tradition. Marx and Engels were continually inveighing against what they called "mechanistic" materialism. They repeatedly criticised what they considered to be the narrow, oversimplified materialism of the 18th- and 19th-century enlightenment. They were pioneers in emphasising that life was an incomparably more complex phenomenon than was allowed for in either the French rationalist or, still more, the English utilitarian traditions which flourished around them. It is strange and sad that the mighty social system which has now been set up in their names should in practice, and whatever its verbal protestations to the contrary, have become more mechanistic—more

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intolerantly contemptuous that is to say, of everything which is not susceptible to exact measurement—than any Western society has ever been.

Presumably the explanation is that although Western rationalism was in itself crudely mechanistic, it was always balanced and offset by the older, humanistic, æsthetic, and religious traditions, which lived on vigorously by its side. Communist rationalism, on the other hand, though in origin much less mechanistic, because based on relatively subtle dialectical distinctions between "the laws" supposedly governing inorganic, organic, and social life respectively, has been offset by no surviving pre-scientific traditions. In the event Communist rationalism has run amuck and continually tends to turn into its opposite of a "faith," as arbitrary, authoritarian, and rigid as any the world has ever suffered.

AGAINST THE AWFUL sterility of this new dogma, the strangled cry of the writers of the literature of reaction has been raised. These writers have convinced us that our attempts to rationalise the social fields have so far been crude and presumptuous. Unless we give far greater weight to the subjective side of man, unless we recognise the power of Pasternak's *troika* of values, we shall achieve only disasters. The creativeness of personal relations, of æsthetics, or of religious experience, is what matters to-day, wherever at any rate the economic problem is on the way to solution. And that will prove equally true whether we are trying to make Communism or merely to make money.

NEVERTHELESS the literature of reaction has now done its work. It is now time to turn our faces in the other direction. The catastrophe of Communist rationalism must not make us despair of reason: reason must for ever strive to encompass all that the old rationalism ignores. We cannot achieve such encompassing reason yet; we do not know how to bring those things which Pasternak celebrates within our universe of rational discourse. It can be argued that we never shall, but I do not know why we should suppose that. Is it not possible dimly to conceive of a science which re-embraced, as did the science of the ancient world, at its own level of complexity, everything that we to-day think of as "not-science?" If so it would, no doubt, become our æsthetic, our ethic, and our religion. That may be centuries or millennia away; in the meanwhile scepticism of the social conclusions of reason is our most rational attitude. To doubt, to suspend judgment where the evidence is still inadequate, is one of the highest applications of the reasoning faculty. It is the opposite of unreasonable to recognise the existence of mystery. We can hardly begin to explain the things which, when once we have our daily bread, make life worth living. But that is merely a reason for caution and empiricism when we are forced to take our social decisions.

In so far as the literature of reaction has been a protest, however frenzied, against a reckless failure to take all that into account, it has been justified. If both in intention and in effect it had stopped there, there would be little in it to criticise. But inevitably it has not stopped there; it has sometimes crossed, intentionally or unintentionally, a critical line. On one side of that line are those who point to the unsolved mysteries of social life in order the better to approach their comprehension. On the other side are those who point to the mysteries in order to dissuade us from even attempting to apply reason to society. That is the test. Those who pass this line have deserted, whether they know it or intend it, and whether their inner motive be weariness, class-prejudice, or simply despair, to the enemies of civilised life. Who can deny that at its worst and most extreme, some of this literature has thus deserted? That some of its authors have sometimes gloried in our ignorance, exalted our folly, sought to forbid the extension of the frontiers of the known and declared with unmistakable satisfaction that all the most important things in life can never be understood? The effect of this part of the literature has been to promote that "loss of nerve," as Koestler calls it in his most recent work, which has often before in the history of civilisation set a limit to scientific inquiry.

We must not blame these authors for the consequences of their words: they had to utter their cry of protest against the trap into which a mechanistic rationalism had led the world. But though we must not blame them, we must protect ourselves from them. The nightmare of the imposition of mechanism is passing. Now is the time to take up once more the unending task of reason.

THE MYSTERIES are seen to be far deeper than we dreamed; reason must become by that much the finer to comprehend them.

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ART

Gentlemen Impressionists

By Andrew Forge

FROM the mid-1880's, when the English could no longer avoid measuring themselves against their contemporaries in France, until the mid-1950's, artists and critics have been looking for those amongst their number who seem truly to understand what French painting is about; and at the same time (it is the other side of the coin) for those who seem to stand in the clearest and most distinctive contrast to the French. It has been as though the confidence and self-respect of English art has depended upon its ability to square this circle: to demonstrate its grasp of the most important art of modern times *and* to prove its independence from it. Thus an artist like Duncan Grant or Elliot Seabrooke or Patrick Heron has been of interest as much for the interpretation he has made of Cézanne or Seurat or Braque as for the intrinsic value of his work; and similarly a Stanley Spencer, a Lowry, or a Lynn Chadwick has been estimated as much for his "Englishness" as for anything else. When an artist appears whose position can be discussed from both directions, a Graham Sutherland, a Wyndham Lewis, a Victor Pasmore, he becomes a cultural hero. Steer and Sickert are the archetypes of such heroes.

Both appeared at a time when art and art-scandal were popular news, a situation made by Whistler and Wilde as much as by the distant repercussions of events in Paris. They were at the centre of the scandals that greeted the early exhibitions of the New English Art Club, miniature echoes of the Impressionist exhibitions of fifteen years before. Both contributed to the *Yellow Book*. After 1905 both had achieved their own kind of celebrity and from then until the 1930's were accepted as the central figures of English painting against whom younger artists measured themselves. From the start of his career, Steer was warmly supported by D. S. MacColl (who in 1892 compared him with Romney to Romney's disadvantage, and in 1900 placed him above Constable), George Moore who described him as "the only painter in London who could fill the blank that Manet's death had made in my life" and an influential circle of admirers. A picture by him was first acquired by the Tate in 1906, and he was the first living artist to have a retrospective exhibition there (in 1929).

Sickert's reputation, during his lifetime, was a far less public one. His authority among his contemporaries rested first on his friendship with Degas and other French painters. He went out of his way to avoid permanent bonds with the circle that surrounded Steer and did all he could to give an impression of unpredictable frivolity. Naturally he had nothing like the same official success; however from his return to England in 1905 until the middle of the war he was at the centre of the art-politics of the time, as the host of all the advanced artists at his Fitzroy Street studio, as a co-founder of the Camden Town Group, the Allied Artists' Association, the London Group. And during this period he was not only writing vigorous criticism but also teaching a succession of students.... But it was not until the 1930's that his reputation began to soar to its present height. A new generation of painters, men who had grown up *since* the cubist revolution, rediscovered him and turned to him as to the source of a particular interpretation of realism. There was a retrospective exhibition at the National Gallery just before his death, and from this point onwards it has been the more or less accepted view that he was the most important and best English painter since Turner.

THE CASE OF THESE TWO is admittedly a domestic matter. It would not be simple to defend a Steer landscape or a Sickert interior to a Frenchman, at least not on the grounds that one would wish.

Walter Sickert and Wilson Steer were born a hundred years ago and their centenaries have been commemorated by recent exhibitions at the Tate Gallery.

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He no doubt would see in it only the crudest reflections of his own 19th century and would be embarrassed rather than entertained by the English accent. Steer and Sickert are not artists by whom we could hope to be fairly judged abroad.

And yet whatever their proper position as artists, the fact remains that their historical importance to English painting is unassailable. Their working lives stretched from the 1880's to the 1930's, that is to say they spanned the transition from the decadence of the 19th century into 20th-century art. They responded in ranging degrees to this transition; at the same time they were catalysts, as it were, of a continuous critical evolution during this time. Their work and their reputations are in themselves a history of the key problem in painting at this time. It goes without saying that modern art grows out of Impressionism, that Cubism is unthinkable without Monet. Half of the problems that English art has encountered in its interpretations of 20th-century French art are the consequences of the fact that Impressionism was itself a foreign language; and this difficulty has been confounded further by the fact that by coincidence (the sketches of Constable and Turner, the palette of the pre-Raphaelites) the Impressionism of Monet did not look as foreign as in fact it was. This has given a characteristic slant to all subsequent developments, to Roger Fry's assessment of Cézanne, for example, or Wyndham Lewis' definition of the modern artist, or Ben Nicholson's response to abstract art. In trying to understand the evolution of our painting during the present century it is tremendously important that we should understand the first English overtures towards Impressionism; for this reason, before any other, Steer and Sickert demand our attention.

THE best painting done in England during the years before the foundation of the New English Art Club was distinguished by its reverential attitude towards nature. Of course this had little to do with realism in the continental sense. However searchingly Ruskin analysed the strata of rocks or Rossetti examined the tendrils of the honeysuckle, neither was concerned with anything that would place them beside Courbet or Manet. Theirs was the reverse of a materialistic thought; it was rather a matter of ideals and sentiment.

But by the 1880's a new ingredient had transformed the scene. Whistler had been in London since 1859. His collision with Ruskin occurred in 1879. His work, which was widely known, and his ideas, publicised by himself and Wilde and others, called up a new climate, a new sense of what painting could be.*

> That nature is always right, is an assertion artistically as untrue as it is one whose truth is universally taken for granted.

And

> Nature contains the elements in colour and form of all pictures as the keyboard contains the notes of all music. But the artist is born to pick and choose and group with science those elements that the result may be beautiful.... To say to the painter that nature is to be taken as she is is to say to the player that he may sit on the piano.

English Impressionism, such as it was, was born by *Modern Painters* out of *The 10 O'clock Lecture*.

The young painters of the 1880's accepted Realism as the proper point of departure for modern painting. That is to say, anecdote and decorative invention were to be suppressed in favour of the thing seen. "Suppose," Sickert told D. S. MacColl, "that you paint a woman carrying a pail of water through that door, and drops were spilt on the planks. There is a natural necessary rhythm about the pattern they make, much better than anything you could invent." But this is not to say that London impressionism, even Sickert at his most forceful, had much in common with its continental predecessors, with Monet's reckless indifference to the conventions of picture-making, or Degas' rage for actuality.

> Impressionism [Sickert again, in his introduction to the London Impressionists' exhibition at Goupils, December, 1889] has no wish to record anything merely because it exists.... It accepts as the aim of the picture what Edgar Allen Poe asserts to be the sole legitimate province of the poem, beauty....
>
> It does not admit of the narrow interpretation of the word Nature which would stop short outside the four-mile radius. It is, on the contrary, strong in the belief that for those who live in the most complex city in the world, the most fruitful course of study lies in a persistent effort to render the magic and the poetry which they daily see among them, by means which... are offered to the student... not so much on the canvases that yearly line our shows of competitive painting, as on the walls of the National Gallery.

Art for Art's Sake, as it worked itself out during the 'nineties, took on a double meaning, re-drawing the distinction between art and nature and in doing so, claiming more of nature's material. Everything that life yielded, it told the artist, was grist to his mill. So the æsthete placed objects before ideas and sensations before objects; so the painter discovered the city, shadows, tenements, London's appal-

* WHISTLER. *The Ten O'Clock Lecture*. 1885.

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ling fog. After the turn of the century it became respectable, and the excitement went out of it; it degenerated into a sanction for vacuity; it bred the purposeless sketch and the figure composition and it created an emptiness of thought that the more vigorous minds tried to fill with something they called poetry. But all through the 'nineties Art for Art's Sake was the most live idea current and it put a strange stamp, both daring and reserved, on the work of any artist who was touched by it.

The "æsthetic critic" that Wilde described in *The Critic as Artist* turns away from the "obvious modes" that deliver their message and are then silent, and turns to embrace "such modes as suggest reserve and mood and by their imaginative beauty make all interpretations true and no interpretation final." If Wilde had been another man he might have found these modes in Sickert, in Steer's interiors, in the best of Maitland, Lavery, Starr, for here the withdrawal or the obliqueness of subject-matter adds a positive quality which we cannot miss even now: they seem to be always hinting, playing on the nerves of an audience used to having its subjects explicit. Certainly there is little like this in French art. Ingres' *La Source* does not strike us as a picture in which nothing happens, nor does a Renoir nude, and even the most bizarre of the early Vuillards gains its effect not so much from the abandonment of a subject as from the abandonment of a canon. "Why not frame the sonnet?" Whistler asked Rossetti, when he was shown a poem that went with a picture. He could not see the connection between the two. His English followers could, and they took the more daring step of leaving the poem unwritten.

ALTHOUGH it is outside the scope of this article to discuss English Impressionism as a whole, it is necessary to take account of some of the ideas connected with it which affected both Steer and Sickert even if they rejected them.

An important faction of the New English Art Club during its early years was made up of painters who had studied in Paris and learned the conventions of naturalistic tonal painting. They had come under the powerful influence of Bastien Lepage, who had died at the height of his fame in 1884. It is not difficult to understand his appeal to the English; he was perhaps the most Victorian of French painters. His subjects were drawn from peasant life and struck a familiar note of sentimental concern for the poor and picturesque. Also he was a doctrinaire *plein airiste* and this was eagerly seized upon by his English followers as the minimum platform from which the view could be maintained that nature was always right. Working in the open air ("Everything from a Kit-Kat to a seven-footer," as La Thangue told an interviewer) they produced a body of pictures of fishermen and peasants in the tonality of over-exposed photographs, extraordinary for their uniformity of manner and depressed romantic atmosphere.

The whole cast of Sickert's character was foreign to the good-earth mysticism of these painters. There was a dramatic collision between them in, of all places, the memorial volume to Bastien Lepage which appeared in 1892. Sickert contributed an essay in which he attacked the *plein air* method, and contrasted it with that of Millet:

> Millet observed and observed again, making little in the way of studies on the spot... and when he held his picture he knew it, and the execution was the singing of a song by heart and not the painful performance in public of a meritorious feat of sight-reading.

SICKERT'S TRAINING gave authority to his attack. Under Whistler, who painted his portraits from the model, he had seen too many failures to have any confidence in direct painting. He mistrusted the amateur in Whistler; his pictures were not "brought about by conscious stages each so planned as to form a steady progression to a foreseen end... they were a series of superimpositions of the same operation." His meeting with Degas confirmed his belief in the traditional methods of painting and from then on he was able increasingly to separate drawing and design from execution. He took to squaring up his drawings, ordering his palette with premixed tones, under-painting, and calling on all the traditional studio procedures.

Thus the painter who was in the best position of all to interpret Impressionism to the English was, from the first, arguing against the experimental empirical aspects of Impressionism. The characteristic value of the Impressionist touch was for him a self-sufficient thing. What was it, he asks, that one gained from a modern picture when one approached it closely? "Not new facts about the subject..." but "a subtle attribute which painters call 'quality'... a certain beauty and fitness of expression in paint, apparently ragged perhaps, and capricious, but revealing to the connoisseur." In an essay published in 1892, D. S. MacColl had this to say:

> Drawing is at bottom a kind of gesture, a method of dancing upon paper. The dance may be mimetic; but it is the *verve* of the performance which impresses... (the draughtsman) wishes to convince the imagination, not to delude the senses; and the sheer beauty of handling will do this more effectually than a death-like projection or a multitude of circumstances.

It is plain to see how this idea of drawing,

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which attaches itself naturally to the handling of paint, bears fruit later in the *bravura* of a John or a McEvoy. But it is important to remember its origins in the æsthetic movement, in the cult of the elliptical, of quality for its own sake. The Ruskin-Whistler action was really all about this, a division between painters in which Whistler, Albert Moore, and the rest could, and Frith and Burne Jones could not, see a picture as an æsthetic object as well as an æsthetic representation.

Sickert's love of his material and his rough yet exquisite handling of it is an entirely self-contained quality in his painting. Compared with the handling of any French painter, even Vuillard, it seems to live a life of its own, nearly indifferent to the forms it represents. We can if we choose look at one of his canvases and see nothing but energy and intelligence and sensibility in self-absorbed play with material. It is as though in each painting he was endorsing, under his breath, Maurice Denis' dictum of the picture being first a flat surface covered with colours in a certain order. And it was precisely this confidence in the play of painting that gave him his extraordinary freedom over his subject-matter. He, almost alone among his contemporaries, was untouched by "poetic" ideas. Painting is illustration, he would declare, daring his friends to call him flippant. This frank admission left him free to sustain his craftsman's objectivity and provided his art with its most outstanding quality: an ironic balance between the sharp human meaning of the scene and the visual attributes he abstracted from it. Never was a famous monument gilded by the rays of the rising sun recorded so drily as St. Mark's was by Sickert, nor a sex murder reported with such elegant indifference as the Camden Town Murder.

ALMOST before it had begun to be wild the New English Art Club turned towards the past. Sickert's portrait of George Moore, the *Yellow Book*, Steer's early seaside pictures had had scandalous receptions but they were on a literary level; already in 1895 Moore was writing in a review of the club's annual exhibition: "a little reef is enough to bring about a great shipwreck; a generation has wasted half its life [*i.e.*, at trying to paint in the open air] and the Old Masters are again becoming the fashion." The speedy retreat from *avant gardism* (however mild) can be seen as a move forced upon it by pressure from the outside and also by certain tendencies inherent in the position adopted by the painters themselves.

As to the outside pressure, two factors are particularly important. One is the general change of climate that followed Oscar Wilde's conviction, and the other is the appointment of Fred Brown to the Slade professorship and the gradual identification of the most important art school in the country with the New English Art Club.

Wilde went to prison in 1895. During the next five years the world of the æsthetes collapsed. "I implore you to destroy *all* copies of *Lysistra* ... by all that is holy *all* obscene drawings," wrote Beardsley from his death-bed; and Yeats, looking back at 1900:

> Everybody got down off his stilts ... nobody drank absinthe with his black coffee; nobody went mad; nobody committed suicide; nobody joined the Catholic Church. ...

And this headlong renunciation of "decadence" that went with the Boer War, the Barrack Room Ballads and the Diamond Jubilee was also a boom in "healthy" British sentiment (for "decadent" meant French as well as everything else: "Its fang de sieckle that does it, my dear, that and education and speaking French. ...").

This provided part of the impetus for the extraordinary nationalistic interpretation of Impressionism, held in varying degrees by MacColl, Tonks, Steer, and their circle, of which the most extreme expression was given by Wynford Dewhurst:

> It cannot be too clearly understood that the Impressionistic idea is of English birth. Originated by Constable, Turner, Bonnington and some members of the Norwich school ... like most innovators they found their practice to be in advance of their age. ... the French artists simply developed a style which was British in its conception.

Of far greater interest than this claim, which is after all not much more quaint than Pissaro's counter-claim that Impressionism was descended from Clouet, was the opinion generally held that French art was in the decline. Degas was spoken of as the last of the Masters; Moore spoke of the New English as a seed blown overseas from ruined France, and he encouraged English painters to believe not only that French art was dead but also that it was their duty to realise themselves as British artists. And, of course, at the time when artists in London were trying to take stock of Impressionism and to find out what it meant to them, the style was meeting the full flood of reaction in Paris. The New English was founded in the year of Seurat's *La Grand Jatte* and when in the late 'nineties the ties between London and Paris were strengthened by younger men, Rothenstein, Conder, John, the Synthesistes were in full pursuit of the primitive, the mediæval, and the "permanent."

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In England eyes that had learned to look at Manet and Monet now looked again at Velasquez. And before long the Impressionist mark was placed on the same level as any other painterly mark. Impressionism, it appeared, was no more than a 19th-century, French, and rather bourgeois application of what Velasquez and Gainsborough and Hals had been doing all the time. Connoisseurship, the respectable residue of æstheticism, prised the art of Manet, Monet, and Pissaro away from the 19th century and returned it to the old masters.

The presence of Brown, Tonks, and Steer at the Slade had in itself a reactionary effect upon the New English Art Club. They were determined that drawing should be taught on a sensible academic basis. Brown had himself experienced the absurdities of art-teaching current at the South Kensington Schools. There, he wrote later, "the idea of working by construction did not exist. The word plane was never mentioned...." The problem of teaching drawing, "resolves itself into a question whether art should be taught on a basis of science, or of something vague and indefinable, varying with the bias of the teacher.... Structure, the laws of optics, the relation of the parts to the whole, etc., can be taught."

A characteristic quasi-Florentine style of drawing was developed at the Slade. It was a style that only made sense if it was related to an ideal of form, an ideal drawn from the old masters. It was certainly not impressionist in the sense of conveying an impression of a thing seen under certain circumstances. The fact is that Tonks, convinced naturalist though he was, had as little understanding of Impressionism as he had sympathy for anything after it. Rossetti was the first and profoundest influence on him and the typically pre-Raphaelite notion of "poetry" always came between him and the outside world: "What has made (painting) partly understandable to me is the idea of Poetry, by that I mean that part of us which seeks to express the spirit...."

Wilson Steer's retreat from the brink is perhaps the most revealing factor in the whole situation. His painting between 1885 and 1895 was the most advanced that was being done in England; every aspect of the Walberswick seasides was daring and unorthodox in the context of English painting and also vis-à-vis the French pictures from which they derive. On the surface these pictures appear to be attempts to transplant the vision of Monet to the English coast and countryside. Yet one rarely feels in Steer the pressure of actual observation for its own sake. His approach was a synthetic one even when it appeared to be the opposite, and the Whistlerian artist "born to pick and choose and group... that the result may be beautiful" is never far away. But beautiful is not to be detached from "poetry," a mood, a dreaming world. These children, mooning or possessed or running into the orange sunlight with their *art nouveau* bows flying, they are drawn from the same soil as the *Turn of the Screw* or *Dream Days*.

The detailed notation of Steer's paint is, unlike Monet's, both illusionistic and æsthetically self-conscious. For instance, in the Fitzwilliam's "Children Paddling" the shingle in the left foreground is represented by a mass of dots which is both meticulously rhythmical as a pattern and also performs a sort of paraphrase of perspective. On the right the surface of the water is defined by an arabesque of glittering white blobs. There is an extraordinary and disturbing tension between the self-conscious pattern of these highlights and the way in which the children and the boat gliding in from the right are established in space. A brilliant sense of the all-absorbing impact of sunlight is combined with the feeling of an artificial, timeless world, far removed from our own. The particular quality of the light, one feels, is valued not for its own sake but because of its resonance: it is the light of childhood holidays, sand castles, shrimping.

Although Steer never lost this grasp of light (it was his greatest gift), it was not long before his dreaming, a sort of nostalgia for a time-without-time, that in his early work was satisfied by the children on the beaches, transferred itself to the past in art. By the mid-nineties he was already playing with style, making *pastiches* of Gainsborough, Velasquez, Corot, indeed of any example from the past which approximated to the loose handling and blurred definition of Impressionism. The first high-point of these studies was the *Toilet of Venus* (Tate) of 1896 which was painted in the greys, pinks, and lemons of Velasquez and evoked a make-believe Fragonard. After this picture his work was never quite the same. By 1900 his landscapes had lost most of the cool, crisp colours of Impressionism and had drifted off into a golden haze. He visited the famous picturesque sites, Turner's *Liber Studiorum* in his pocket (MacColl tells us). Pictures like *Chepstow Castle* and *Richmond Castle* are declarations of an entirely different set of values to the earlier seasides and bohemian interiors. The field of vision is wider, more panoramic, as though he were acknowledging a greater responsibility. Nothing could define the differences between the youngster of the *fin de siècle* and the Edwardian success more accurately than a comparison of the scatty off-

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centre placing of the figures in the Tate's *Walberswick Beach* and the centred keep of *Richmond Castle*, rolling clouds above, hunters exercising in the middle distance.

After several years abroad, Sickert came back to London in 1905 to find a very changed situation. He and Steer were no longer in the vanguard of affairs; a new generation was dazzling the New English with its precocious brilliance and already John, Bevan, Ginner, Gore, and others had made their own contacts in Paris and were beginning to reflect the influence of Post Impressionism, of Gauguin in particular. Cézanne was first exhibited in London in 1905 and from this point onwards his name crops up in every discussion. The issue between the London Impressionist generation and their successors reached its climax when Fry introduced the second of his Post Impressionist exhibitions (autumn, 1912) which included not only Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Gauguin, but also Fauves and Cubists.

STEER and his circle turned their faces against Cézanne. So did Sickert, although less unambiguously and with less rancour. For one thing he owed it to his reputation to establish that he had known all about Cézanne for years: "now, to us, born—in parts—of the Impressionist movement, Cézanne has always been a dear, a venerated and beloved uncle. We have known him all our lives...." But the difficulty lay first and last in Cézanne's distortions.

> Cézanne, less than anyone, achieved significant form. What is the first gift needed to achieve significant form? A sense of aplomb.... Cézanne was utterly incapable of getting two eyes to tally, or a figure to sit or stand without lurching.

And MacColl echoes this more cheekily:

> ...But the figure was too difficult for him, and from difficulties of all sorts he escaped into still-lives... flattened jugs, apples, and napkins like blue tin that would clank if they fell.

Accepting the legend of Cézanne's own dissatisfaction, they singled out those very qualities in his work which were indicating a new realm in painting and held them up as evidence of his incompetence; the internal rhythms, the interplay between the canvas and the motif, the all-over interlocking of sensation and design, these, in the eyes of Sickert and MacColl were no more than the eccentricities of a fumbling incompetent.

NOW THIS FANTASTIC MISUNDERSTANDING, fantastic because it was on the part of such intelligent and gifted painters, would be of little interest unless it could be connected with their own position as painters. The fact is that it is founded in their own relationship with Impressionism, above all in their own failure to assess the content of Impressionism.

Sickert, we have seen, was more or less indifferent to that side of Impressionism which was represented by Monet; that is to say, that which is based on direct contact with the motif. Somewhere he speaks of "the kind of insensitiveness, the necessity of falling back on subjective habit and formula that the dogma of the actual presence of the model brings with it...." And he argued strongly against *plein airism* when the movement was at its height during the 'eighties. This is a crucial point. "The kind of insensitiveness" he speaks of is a reality when an artist is attempting to make a convincing replica of his subject or to illustrate its character from the life. There is always a conflict between the physical presence of the thing he is painting and those characteristic attributes which he wishes to extract from it. The illustrator must approach his theme through the medium of memory. But the art of Monet is the antithesis of illustration; it is a realism of sensation. That is to say, the impressionist painter's criterion is not "Will that provide a convincing description of what it was...?" but "Is it true or false to my present sensation of it...?" And Sickert's indifference to this new question led him to ridicule Cézanne for attempting to do what he took to be impossible. He speaks of the "Tragic slowness of Cézanne's method" as though Cézanne was in the same camp as Bastien Lepage.

STEER was no more able than Sickert to grasp the unprecedented character of Impressionist content. Like Sickert he needed some sort of barrier between himself and what he was painting: without it picture-making would have been impossible. Sickert found this barrier in his rationalised, craftsmanlike methods; Steer found it in the models that he borrowed from the old masters. Just as ritual and protocol might remove a man from the anxieties of human relationships, so the forms of traditional landscape composition removed Steer from the raw nagging of actual experience. He was able to filter off just what he wanted from actuality and no more. As Sickert was freed by his method and could take full command of a pattern of flat shapes, a telling illustrative gesture, so Steer was freed by Turner and Gainsborough to exploit the light of a particular scene and play its glitter or mellowness or serenity to its conclusion.

THEIR ALIENATION from what one takes to be the heart of the modern tradition as it descends

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from Impressionism is exposed more clearly than anywhere else in the quality of their drawing, in the way in which they define individual forms in space in relation to the picture surface. It is rare in the work of either of them to find a passage where the brush seems to lock on to a form, or to feel that the progress of the picture constitutes a search for clarification or articulation or understanding. Sickert separated drawing from painting; his brush strokes are a filling in. It never seems to matter to him that a certain shape in pencil on a piece of paper four-inches-by-six has a character and significance which is utterly different to when it is an area of colour on a canvas sixteen-inches-by-twenty-four. This is why, in spite of the marvellous quality of his drawing and his grasp of tone, there is always a certain thinness in the spaces, in the positioning of things in his pictures. Steer's sense of shape was infinitely less advanced than Sickert's; he seems rarely to have questioned the appearance of things in this way. A hand in one of his portraits is skated over as though all that mattered to him was that it should be recognised as a hand; a tree will be dashed in with incurious fluency almost as though he was relying upon the sort of pattern-formula that used to be found in old books on landscape. It is rare that any of his pictures will continue to read consistently as one approaches them closely; it is painting at arm's length.

ANY important change of style or sensibility, or one might say, any important artist, modifies the current ideas of what an artist is, what he stands for, and what can be expected of him. The character of the æsthetic movement in England owed a great deal to the fact that it was sponsored as much by writers and dilettantes as by artists. It had a strikingly self-conscious character that was sharpened by the philistinism of Victorian society. The artist became a new sort of hero. Both Steer and Sickert were affected by this self-consciousness and, in retrospect, one can see how their development as painters was restricted by it.

Steer was anything but an intellectual. What grasp he had of painting was intuitive. But the circle that surrounded him so closely consisted of intellectuals, and above all of men with strong ideas about artists. Steer became their tribal god, the great intuitive. Tonks, who clearly felt as passionately about Steer as he did about painting itself, has left an indestructible image of him, one that is confirmed by MacColl and Moore and the rest. In an *Evening at the Vale* Steer snoozes heavily, his head sunk, while Moore reads aloud and Tonks himself poses alert and critical at the mantelpiece. If Steer wakes up at all it will be to yawn a remark of such stunning simplicity that the brilliant ones will be stopped in their tracks. "The master stands in no relation to the moment at which he occurs—a monument of isolation—hinting of sadness—having no part in the progress of his fellow men." Would so much of Steer's work have fallen below his own best level, one wonders, if he had not worked in so indulgent a milieu?

The anti-intellectual prejudice of Steer's circle (as far as painting was concerned) surely affected their attitude towards Roger Fry. They were willing to accept Cézanne as some sort of half-wit, the peasant of Vollard's imagination. What they could not stand was to see a word-man like Fry, who had consistently criticised Impressionism for its lack of intellectual content, building an elaborate and abstruse theory around Cézanne. It seems likely that the virulence with which they repudiated Fry was due in part to their knowledge that they were themselves no more holy fools than he was.

Sickert tended to see these controversies, as all painters do to some degree, as straight conflicts between those who knew what was what (the painters) and those who had to invent explanations (the pundits). In one article he talks about painters as elephants who go where they like and critics as monkeys who ride on their backs and imagine that they direct them. The position that Sickert took up in relation to the Steer-Tonks circle was that of the professional craftsman. As time went on and the Post Impressionist snowball grew, he turned increasingly to the English artists whom he admired most, the illustrators of the 'sixties, the men who worked more as journeymen than as artists in a modern sense. They were the men who knew their job, the professionals. In his criticism he was more likely to quote Poynter or Keene or Sullivan than Whistler or any other art-conscious artist. He became an A.R.A. in 1924, and one sees this gesture as a shot fired not only at the theoretical gymnastics of the modern movement but also at the precious high-mindedness of the Tonks circle. There is no doubt that this attitude, this hearty shrugging-off of personal idealism, placed a limitation on his development. If he had been less happy to rely upon a well-rehearsed procedure in painting, if he had been prepared to think of his pictures as something other than as impersonal artefacts, he would perhaps more often have achieved that compelling tension which fills his few best pictures and which places them in a class apart in English painting.

WHAT was it that Impressionism introduced that transformed the language of painting? It was the assumption that the con-

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tent of painting was subjective; that a modern painting was not so much a *view* of something as the outcome of thought and feeling and observation about something. If it was a view of anything it was a view of a relationship and it was essential to this relationship that it evolved from a painting-situation; thus painting the picture was experiencing whatever was painted, feeling about it, defining it, reconstructing it. Impressionism disposed of subject-matter in the old sense, but it did so to make room for all this.

And it is exactly all this which eluded the English; neither Steer nor Sickert were modern painters in this sense. But it was a close shave; modern characteristics are immanent in their work—the George Moore portrait, the *Servant of Abraham*, certain of Steer's direct studies from the model, the Liverpool *Isle of Purbeck*. They ended up painting out of an attitude, sheltered, as it were, from the rigours of their own best work by the formulæ of craftsmanship and connoisseurship. How was it that the Impressionist attitude meant nothing to the English, even when all eyes were on Impressionist painting? The most effective answer is the simplest: such an attitude could only come out of an educated and proficient tradition, an ambitious milieu. In England there was no such thing and for this reason Painting-for-Painting's-sake was a literary conception, not a real land towards which the painters' paths naturally converged. English painting during the second half of the 19th century was incorrigibly amateur (despite the fortunes made at the game) and the painter whose talent and education was matched by his seriousness and intensity was an isolated exception. The Impressionist attitude called for too great a renunciation, in the English context; to jettison what one valued but had never really possessed was unbearable. It was natural that Sickert should, among other things, try to *recover* an illustrator's expertise, that Steer should try to recover the language of romantic landscape, just as later it was natural that a Wyndham Lewis should see Cubism as a recovery of Quattro Cento disciplines or that a Matthew Smith should use *Fauvisme* to recover the Venetians or that a Graham Sutherland should use Picasso as a divining rod for the English romantic tradition.

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POETRY

Edwin Muir

By Michael Hamburger

What could that greatness be? It was not fame.
Yet now they seemed to grow as they grew less,
And where they lay were more than where they had stood.
They did not go to any beatitude.
They were stripped clean of feature, presence, name,
When that strange glory broke from namelessness.

EDWIN MUIR: THE HEROES

FOR THOSE who responded to him as a man or as a poet, Edwin Muir had something of the nameless glory, the quiet greatness of these heroes. Very little personal contact was needed to be aware of him constantly as a rare individual bound by the "straitness of submission," as a dedicated mind. It may be partly because my sense of indebtedness to Muir has not been diminished by his death that I feel little inclination to submit his work to any systematic critical procedure, or attempt to "place" it in relation to this contemporary's or that. I don't mean by this that I intend to write an extended, and eulogistic, obituary; by the time I got to know his work—later than that of many younger poets more widely read in the 'forties—I had passed the age of literary hero-worship.

Yet I doubt, in any case, whether a strictly analytical approach would do justice to Muir's poetry. About his distinction there can be disagreement, but no argument; it is a totality which some will recognise at once, others will continue to miss and to deny. Fame, as the poem says, has nothing to do with it; the relative neglect of his work during the greater part of his life did not harm it, or him, and no amount of posthumous attention will convince those who find his poetry deficient in sensuous appeal, excitement, and passion. Merely to separate the "technique" of his verse from his vision would be to offend against the integrity of his art.

"The word technique," he wrote in a letter, "always gives me a slightly bewildered feeling; if I can translate it as skill I am more at home with it, for skill is always a quality of the thing that is being said or done, not a general thing at all. A thing asks to be said, and the only test is whether it is said well."

Muir's own criticism, as well as his poetry, is directed towards the same totality of means and ends.

EDWIN MUIR'S HEROISM was not of the swashbuckling, his diction not of the word-rattling, kind. As a poet, as a critic, and as a man he was equally unassuming; and his utter lack of pretensions was due to a wholeness, an integrity—to repeat a much abused word—that has become so rare as to be incomprehensible to many. At a time when every activity was tending to become a technique, a discipline, an autotelic function not to be related to any other, he persisted in relating everything to everything, and subordinating every activity to one dominant concern. If Edwin Muir was incorruptible—and he has been described as saintlike—it was not because he shrank from corruption, but because he was whole; because his moral vision and his imaginative vision were not in conflict, and both were integral parts of his nature.

Yet he achieved and maintained this integrity in the teeth of circumstances that could hardly have been more adverse. His late development as a poet is often mentioned; but what is much more remarkable is that he became a poet at all, and the kind of poet he was. His *First Poems* were published in 1925, only two years before his fortieth birthday; and only nine of the twenty-four poems that made up this volume appear in the new *Collected Poems*[1] prepared by him shortly before his death, several of them with drastic cuts and revisions. Other poets of this century, such as Wallace Stevens, also emerged late; but for very different reasons. Attentive readers of Muir's *Autobiography* will

[1] *Collected Poems 1921–1958.* Faber & Faber. 25s.

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need no further explanation of his late development or of the blemishes that made him reject more than half of the first, and the whole of his next book of verse, the sequence *Chorus of the Newly Dead* (1926); but a few observations are called for.

EDWIN MUIR was never a young poet, with all the dubious glamour and frequent absurdity that this epithet implies. The young poet, of course, is an overrated phenomenon; but though it is easier to be a young poet than a middle-aged one, and to be an old poet is the greatest achievement of all, there is a very good reason why lyrical poetry should have come to be associated with youth. Lyrical poetry springs most naturally from a state of potentiality, of promise or "pre-existence," as Hofmannsthal called it; the poetry of experience, of full involvement in life, is both harder to write and less immediately appealing. Much of the lyrical poetry written by older men is the product of a more or less deliberately arrested development; but the true poets of maturity are at once innocent and experienced, so that age itself becomes an irrelevance. From his first collection onwards, Edwin Muir's poetry had this balance between youth and age, innocence and experience. There are retrospective poems in this first collection, and poems of youth regained in his last. This meant that the impact of immediate experience was not, and could not be, Muir's primal concern; nor, for different reasons, could it be the arrangement of sounds and images "in their own right."

Edwin Muir received very little schooling, and did not pass through any of those institutions in which poetry is accepted, if not encouraged, as a civilised accomplishment. As Muir himself pointed out in an early *Note on the Scottish Ballads*,[2] "it is worth noting that the one or two great poets whom Scotland has produced have been in the ordinary sense uncultivated." Despite his wide interests and reading in later years, this is true of Muir's beginning. In the *Autobiography* he recalls his first attempts to attain the skill appropriate to the thing:

> Though my imagination had begun to work, I had no technique by which I could give expression to it. . . . I wrote in baffling ignorance, blundering and perpetually making mistakes.

He also quotes his friend John Holmes' description of him at an earlier period, when his interests were more philosophical than imaginative:

> E. M. is explained by his nationality just as much as by his life. I am sure Muir has never experienced profound emotion through beauty; he has read very little poetry. Their habit of mind is moral and metaphysical. Any writer not concerned with the universal, or with moral problems from a metaphysical point of view, he is inclined to wash out. . . .

Holmes attributes this peculiarity of Muir's to his inherited puritan temper, to his religious experience at the age of fourteen, when he was "saved" by revivalist preachers, as well as to the national character of the Scots; but he could not know that Muir had experienced very profound emotion through beauty in his early childhood. Muir himself had forgotten it at this time, and it took him most of his adult life to remember. One of his last poems is a *Complaint of the Dying Peasantry*.

His early youth falls into two distinct phases —distinct is a euphemism here—his childhood in Orkney and his family's removal to Glasgow, followed by their decline from the dignity of an ancient farming community to near-proletarian squalor, then by the death in rapid succession of his parents and two of his brothers. "I was too young for so much death," was Muir's comment in the *Autobiography*; and he went on to relate how he grew "silent, absent, dingy, and composed" in consequence. The disparity between the two phases led not to integration, but to self-division, self-estrangement, and traumatic fears. Though he did some writing in his Glasgow years, and contributed verse and prose to Orage's *New Age* in his middle twenties, his true literary career did not begin till after his marriage to Willa Anderson in 1919, and could not begin till after a period of psychological treatment.[3]

THE WRETCHEDNESS OF THESE EARLY YEARS is indicated here only because Muir is often thought of as a poet rather remote from the social and political issues of his time. This could not be further from the truth. He came to literature as an outsider when social snobbery was still hale, hearty, and bluff, and outsiders were in no immediate danger of being hugged to death, like young poets; and he suffered hardships, losses, and degradations that make the complaints of our present angry young men sound like the yapping of lap dogs. He became a socialist before socialism was fashionable, or even respectable; and he confronted the realities of Scottish living conditions in his novel *Poor Tom* (1932), largely based on his own family's experiences in Glasgow, and in *Scottish Journey* (1935), a documentary study comparable to Orwell's *The Road*

[2] In *Latitudes* (1924).

[3] The "brilliant and charming analyst" not named in the *Autobiography* was Maurice Nicoll, whose later thought and writings might well seem to have some bearing on Muir's; but Muir was not aware of them when I mentioned Nicoll to him.

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to Wigan Pier (published two years later than Muir's book). His first collection of poems contains ballads written in Scots, and the Scottish literary tradition never lost its claim on him. True to the injunction in his poem *The Journey Back*,

> *Seek the beginnings, learn from whence you came*
> *And know the various earth of which you are made,*

he devoted his last years to a study of the ballads, left unfinished at his death. Yet as a poet he could no more identify himself with Scottish nationalism than with the English political movement of the 'thirties, though he had more personal cause to protest than any of the writers associated with either group.

Muir did not need Yeats to tell him that poetry is not made out of our quarrel with others, but out of our quarrel with ourselves; that it is only through our quarrel with ourselves that we can come to deal truthfully and charitably with the human condition. The unpretentiousness of Muir's poetry and his humility as a man derive from the same recognition. His humility was neither an attitude nor a virtue in any conventional sense, but simply an aspect of his self-knowledge or—this comes to the same thing—of his humanity. From his first book of poems to the last, previously uncollected pieces, he explored a single theme, the relation of the individual life to the whole of life, past, present, and future. As he put it in the *Autobiography*,

> Our minds are possessed of three mysteries: where we came from, where we are going and, since we are not alone, but members of a countless family, how we should live with one another.

The political and social problem is included in this preoccupation; specific events and conditions, such as the last war, the impoverishment of Scotland, the plight of refugees, the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia, are dealt with more or less overtly in some of the poems, but the particular is always subordinated to the general, the fact to the truth. Despite their rare constancy and unity, neither Muir's preoccupation nor his art was in any way static; in reading the *Collected Poems* one is struck more forcefully than ever by the development and progression of both.

As one would expect after the circumstances of his youth, Muir's first works are pervaded by a sense of duality. His utter estrangement from the false self imposed on him by society—from the clerk in the bone factory—induced a trance-like state in which he could project himself at will into dreams and visions of extraordinary vividness. These dreams and visions provided a store of archetypal images and actions on which he drew all his life; but the more urgent task was to reconcile dream with reality, the dreaming self with the waking self.

Tragic conflict and incompatibility are the theme of his short novel *The Marionette* (1927), an account of the relationship between an idiot child and his father, set in Austria (where Muir became interested in the educational theories of A. S. Neill). Contact between the father's world of adult realities and the son's world of infantile fantasy can only be made by series of delicate experiments, partly unsuccessful, involving dolls and puppets; yet, though father and son come to grow alike in appearance, each remains confined to his own world. This minute and claustrophobic narrative points to Muir's later affinities with Kafka, but it could only have been written while Muir himself suffered from a maladjustment less extreme than the boy's, but also basically due to a conflict between imagination and reality.

Some twenty years later, in his book *The Voyage*, Muir could look back with a certain detachment and irony at the two phases of his youth (*The Myth*):

> *My childhood all a myth*
> *Enacted on a distant isle;*
> *Time with his hourglass and his scythe*
> *Stood dreaming on the dial . . .*
>
> *My youth a tragi-comedy,*
> *Ridiculous war of dreams and shames*
> *Waged for a Pyrrhic victory*
> *Of reveries and names,*
> *Which in slow-motion rout were hurled*
> *Before sure-footed flesh and blood*
> *That of its hunger built a world,*
> *Advancing rood by rood.*

But it is in this collection—in its last pages, to be precise—that Muir began to resolve the dualism of time and eternity, myth and reality, idea and phenomenon, fable and story, which he had perpetually varied and developed in the earlier works. He was approaching his sixtieth year before he was wholly rid of the fear that there might be "no crack or chink, no escape from Time," as he had written in *Variations on a Time Theme* (1934).

Here it is as well to turn for a moment to Muir's critical works of the early period. Socialism and Social Credit were two of the movements that helped Muir to cope with the economic realities of the age; but "how we should live with one another" was not his only problem. His personal deprivation was too

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radical, and his personal liberation not only from social squalor, but from the Calvinist narrowness of his Glasgow surroundings, demanded measures at once more drastic and more appropriate to his own case. Intellectual and æsthetic emancipation were the greater need. For a time he came under the influence of Heine, then of Nietzsche. Of the two, Nietzsche's influence was far more than a youthful intoxication, the leaven in Muir's first literary works; its importance is such that it needs separate treatment.

Anyone who comes to Muir's brilliant critical book *Latitudes* from his later works cannot fail to be amazed by the entirely different personality that meets him in this book. The Muir of these early essays and aphorisms, written between 1919 and 1924, is an *esprit fort*, a sophisticated, cynical, utterly individualistic transvaluator of all values—in short, a Nietzschean. It is the second, but chronologically earlier, section of the book that propounds the doctrine of life and love as play, of "absolute mastery over oneself and the world," of "life instead of Utopia," and tells us that "the creative thinker does not need salvation; he brings it." Whatever else it may be—and it shows extraordinary psychological penetration—this book is not humble.

Some of the aphorisms remain valid. "The unfulfilled desires of the virtuous are evil," with its corollary, "the unfulfilled desires of the evil are good." And: "The intensity of the unconscious is poetry; the intensity of the conscious is wit."

Or, more profound than these, and more characteristic of Muir: "There is a mystery of stupidity as well as mystery of genius. The philosopher is an enigma to the average man, but not a greater one than the average man is to the philosopher."

Yet, in its insistence on the antinomy between genius and the average man, the book is far removed from the poet who was to write: "It is easy for the false imagination to hate a whole class; it is hard for the true imagination to hate a single human being."

In the *Autobiography* Muir tells how this Nietzschean arrogance conflicted with his socialism; how he came to see Nietzsche's choice as a "self-crucifixion out of pride, not out of love," and soon rid himself of all his Nietzschean affectations of super-manhood, partly through his psychological analysis. What is not so well known is how much of Nietzsche's doctrine Muir retained to the end. In his fine poem *The Recurrence* from *The Narrow Place* (1941), the person of Nietzsche, the self-proclaimed Anti-Christ, fades beside the reality of Christ; but the title itself points to what it was in Nietzsche's doctrine that continued its hold over Muir's imagination.

Nothing was ever done
Till it was done again
And no man was ever one
Except through dead men.

TWICE-DONE, ONCE-DONE, from *The Voyage* (1946)

The idea of the "eternal recurrence" remained essential to Muir's vision, however modified by Platonic and Christian elements. Nietzsche's cosmology, Plato's metaphysics, and Christ's ethic of love are at first opposed, then blended, and finally fused in Muir's poetry.

IT IS EQUALLY TRUE that Muir's total identification with Nietzsche's attitude proved as unprofitable to his criticism as to his poetry, because it was a barrier against the humanity that became the basis of both. But part of the first critical book, and the whole of the next, *Transition* (1926), confront Scottish, foreign, and contemporary English literature from a point of view quite independent from Nietzsche. The essays on the ballads, Burns and George Douglas in the first collection, those on Joyce, Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley, T. S. Eliot, and Edith Sitwell in the second, and the essay on Arnold Bennett contributed to Edgell Rickword's *Scrutinies* (1928), are authentic stages both in Muir's development as a critic and in his progress towards self-knowledge.

"Reality can be attained just as surely through criticism as through any other form of literature," he wrote in *A Plea for Psychology in Literary Criticism*, and his own essays are the proof.

In these early critical works, from *Latitudes* to *The Structure of the Novel*, Muir came to grips with "the problems of our time, which are so defacing, so unlike, in their search for unsightly things, the problems of more human eras" (*A Note on Ibsen*); in doing so he eliminated what was false in his own aims, and defined his own humanity. In exactly the same way, Muir's residence in Italy, Austria, Germany, and Czechoslovakia at the same period served to make him aware of his own roots; the exploration of foreign countries—*Latitudes* contains an essay on Prague—and the exploration of various literatures were what Hölderlin called "colonisation," a process which necessarily precedes the most difficulty task of all, that of "going to the source" and "learning what is proper to oneself." Thus, when Muir remarks that "in no poetry, probably, in the world is there less imagery than in the ballads," and that this is due to a "terrific simplicity," he is also pointing to a characteristic of his own, still unwritten poetry; and he attributes the same starkness to "that something materialistic in the imagination of the Scots, which is one of their great quali-

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ties." The admirable essay *North and South* is another instance of Muir's search for his own place within the European tradition, as well as the record of a discovery that is part of his permanent debt to Nietzsche:

> that Western Europe is, like Egypt and Greece, eternal whether it passes away or remains; and the rise and fall of civilisations are not to be mourned with irrevocable sorrow by those who have learned the secret of making them immortal.

With *Transition* and *The Structure of the Novel* Muir had arrived at criticism proper, less autobiographically revealing than the first book, because more certain of its own point of view. The later criticism does not concern me here. His last critical book, *Essays on Literature and Society*, appeared in 1949. Perhaps it was an exaggeration to say that the neglect suffered by Muir did his work no harm, for the great majority of readers remember him only for the most ephemeral part of his critical work, his book-reviewing in later years. If it was this neglect that confined him to journalism even in his late maturity, the implications are distressing enough; but it certainly did not embitter Muir or prevent him from writing poetry right up to his last illness and death.

THE early critical works cleared the way for the first poems. In a certain sense it is true to say that the whole of Muir's poetry was a search for lost time, a bridge thrown over the gulf of his lost youth to his island childhood. But this gulf did not widen with increasing age; the paradox of time in his poetry, very much like that in Proust's novel, is that the gulf can be closed in the end by faithful and constant recapitulation. I have followed the *Autobiography* in stressing the personal origin of Muir's need to regain lost time; but it is a foolish and inhuman prejudice to assume that what is personal in origin must remain so in relevance and effect. A truthful and thoroughgoing subjectivity turns into its opposite. The self of Muir's poetry is so thoroughly stripped of circumstance, pose, and vanity, as to be de-personalised; whereas the objectivity of those who cannot face the truth about themselves never penetrates beyond these accretions. "Only the personal is for ever incontrovertible," Nietzsche remarked.

Even in the *First Poems* Muir made his own dreams and memories the starting-point of a journey into history and myth. The *Ballad of Hector in Hades* derives from a childhood fear; the "rough grey stones spotted with lichen" observed at Wye in his early childhood occur in more than one of these poems, written some twenty-five years later. But many of these first poems are merely nostalgic in the manner of Heine, instead of juxtaposing past and present experience, as the later poems do, so as to defeat time and lay bare the heraldic emblem. It is beyond my scope here to trace the process from poem to poem, from book to book, or to do more than indicate some of the obstacles. One of them is the experience of men wholly absorbed in "the common dream," in Yeats' sense, of men in their temporal, material, and animal aspects. The *Autobiography* records one instance of this experience, Muir's vision of the animal faces of fellow-passengers in a tram. Many of the earlier poems are tragic because they see no release from this state, other than death; as late as *The Voyage* (1946), Muir could be haunted by this anti-vision, as in the poem *Epitaph*:

Into the grave, into the grave with him.
Quick, quick, with dust and stones this dead man cover
Who living was a flickering soul, so dim
He never was truly loved nor truly a lover.

Since he was half and half, now let him be
Something entire at last, here in this night
Which teaches us its absolute honesty
Who stay between the light and the half-light...

This anti-vision is related to the experience of Scotland's impoverishment by Calvinism, Puritanism, and material exploitation; significantly, it was in Italy that the breach was healed once and for all, that Muir grasped the mystery of the Incarnation. Few of his poems, even those about the war, are more bitter than *Scotland 1941*:

...But Knox and Melville clapped their preaching palms
And bundled all the harvesters away,
Hoodicrow Peden in the blighted corn
Hacked with his rusty beak the starving haulms.
Out of that desolation we were born.

Even Burns and Scott become "sham bards of a sham nation."

IT WAS NOT TILL THE ITALIAN transfiguration of all his past experience that Muir emerged finally from the labyrinth of "the common dream"—though to him community with all men was part of the truth into which he emerged. In the light of Italy, the transfiguring light, both anti-visions are banished once and for all in a poem (*The Incarnate One*) from his last collection:

The windless northern surge, the seagull's scream,
And Calvin's kirk crowning the barren brae.
I think of Giotto, the Tuscan shepherd's dream,
Christ, man and creature in their inner day.
How could our race betray
The Image, and the Incarnate One unmake
Who chose this form and fashion for our sake?

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Yet Nietzsche and Plato had their part in this late affirmation. The "eternal recurrence" prepared Muir for the final merging of time and eternity, phenomenon and idea, the liberation from Plato's cave. And dreams remained the source of some of his purest poems. A late poem like *The Combat* in *The Labyrinth* (1949), based on an early dream, is one of the closest approximations in poetry to Kafka's world of absolute fiction—so subjective in origin, so inexhaustible and universal in effect; and Edwin and Willa Muir, of course, were Kafka's translators.[4] In comparison, even myth seems an impure form, too much tied to historical and local associations. That is one reason why some of Muir's poems break the unity of particular myths, relating one to another, or penetrating beyond them into pure imagination.

If there seems to be a contradiction between pure imagination and the lack of striking imagery that has been held against Muir, what is overlooked is that no prominent image or metaphor is needed where the whole poem passes beyond analogy, beyond allegory, to render absolute fictions like *The Combat*. Kafka's style, too, is uncommonly bare, literal, and unfigurative. Where Muir attained such immediacy of conception, there is no need for further explanations, such as his nationality, his inherited Puritanism, his native landscape, dominated by sea and rock, or his Platonism:

And sometimes through the air descends a dust
Blown from the scentless deserts of dead time
That whispers: Do not put your trust
In the fed flesh, or colour, or sense, or shape.
This that I am you cannot get in rhyme.

The Journey Back, from *The Labyrinth*

During the last fifteen years or so of his life Muir did succeed in getting it in rhyme, or in the blank verse of his meditative poems (occasionally Wordsworthian when it is retrospective, but more often quite unlike any that has been written in English). I wish I had space to quote at length from poems like *The Return, The Transfiguration*, *The Labyrinth*, or *The Child Dying*, the love poems, so much more than passionate, which Muir never ceased to write until his death, lyrics like *The Late Wasp* and *The Late Swallow*, reflections on his own art, like "all we who make things transitory and good," *Soliloquy* and *The Emblem*, or prophetic poems like *Prometheus* and *The Horses*. But I shall conclude with a few remarks on the selection of the *Collected Poems* and on the last section, the poems previously uncollected.

Even in a purely material and quantitative sense, Muir succeeded in regaining his lost youth; his late beginning was amply compensated by his capacity to grow and change to the very end. This capacity was such that the last two years of his life, the period following the completion of *One Foot in Eden*, must be regarded as a distinct phase. *The Labyrinth* celebrates Muir's emergence from the maze of temporal phenomena. *One Foot in Eden* is pervaded by the transfiguring love of the *Song*:

Sunset ends the day,
The years shift their place,
Under the sun's sway
Times from times fall;
Mind fighting mind
The secret cords unwind
No power can replace:
Love gathers all.

In this collection, Muir appears to come closer than before to Christian doctrine; at least his acceptance of both good and evil, harmony and strife, innocence and corruption, is rendered in symbols largely taken from Biblical sources, though Prometheus and Oedipus share in the transfiguring love. I am not competent to discuss the theological implications of Muir's treatment of Eden and the Fall as archetypes of human experience, or to decide how far it would satisfy the requirements of any sectarian orthodoxy. However, since more than one recent writer on Muir has in fact claimed such orthodoxy for him, or claimed him for such orthodoxy, and since this misunderstanding is likely to be perpetuated despite the evidence of the definitive *Collected Poems*, it is necessary to state once more that neither Muir's Italian illumination, nor his earlier awakening to the significance of the Lord's Prayer, was a religious conversion in any accepted sense of the word.

At the period when he was writing the poems in *One Foot in Eden*, Muir himself drew attention to the imaginative aspect of the conciliatory and transfiguring power, akin to divine grace, that dominates the book. "Perhaps in the imagination of mankind the transfiguration has become a powerful symbol, standing for many things, among them those transformations of reality which the imagination itself creates," he said in

[4] Not only Muir's admiration for Kafka, but his understanding of the works, deepened with time. The sonnet to Kafka in *One Foot in Eden*, strangely parallelled by Muir's tribute to Milton in the same collection, testifies to the admiration. In his Introductions to the translations, Muir had interpreted Kafka's fiction as allegory; it was not till 1947 that he corrected this view and stressed the purely imaginative character of Kafka's works. But this important disclaimer, contributed to a Czech publication, was never noticed in England. Muir's realisation that there is no key to Kafka's fiction has a direct bearing on his own later works.

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1952.[5] The word absolute has occurred in my essay; but it was applied to Muir's imagination, not to his beliefs.

> Shortly before he was taken off to hospital [Mrs. Willa Muir has recorded in a letter] he said to me, with great urgency: "There are no absolutes, no absolutes." He was then in a confused state, but he said it with such force that it was poignant. I said: "No, darling, there are no absolutes at all," and he was comforted. I don't know myself what to make of it, unless he meant that even death was not an absolute; but there it is.

Whatever interpretation we give to these words, and whatever weight, the evidence of Muir's selection from the published volumes is conclusive in one respect. The new volume omits all those poems from *One Foot in Eden* which could possibly qualify as Christian devotional or apologist verse: *The Christmas*, *The Son, Lost and Found*, and *The Lord* (a refutation of atheism). The rejection is significant, because only one poem, *Isaiah*, is omitted from *The Narrow Place*, only two relatively slight lyrics from *The Voyage*, no poem at all from *The Labyrinth*; and the rejection of these later poems cannot be attributed to any but the obvious motive. Clearly Muir was anxious to remain uncommitted to the last; a visionary poet, deeply concerned with the example and teaching of Christ, not a Christian poet.

THE CRUCIAL DIFFERENCE may well lie in Muir's permanent debt to the concept of "eternal recurrence" (adapted by Nietzsche from the pre-Socratic philosophers), which can lend no absolute significance to history or to any single historical event, requires neither personal immortality nor personal redemption, but only a recognition of the eternal pattern that underlies every individual destiny, and affirms this life for the pattern's sake. Even in the title poem of *One Foot in Eden* the emphasis lies on the state of man after the Fall, transformed by the memory of Eden, not on any future life, redemption, or paradise regained:

What had Eden ever to say
Of hope and faith and pity and love
Until was buried all its day
And memory found its treasure trove?
Strange blessings never in Paradise
Fall from these beclouded skies.

The poet who arrived at this affirmation was "time's true servant" (*The Return*), and what he affirmed was the whole of his past life, errors, perplexities, sufferings and all, even "the famished field and blackened tree" of the industrialised Scotland where this poem must have been written, though its imagery also points back to the Glasgow of his lost youth. Perhaps it is the personal approach, in the end, that does least violence to the mysteries celebrated by Muir, rather than any attempt to define them in philosophical or theological terms.

Incapable though he was of pose and mystification—few poets have written more honestly about themselves than Muir in the *Autobiography*—it is as a mystery that Muir regarded his own art. Even memory does not account for it in his last word on the subject, his posthumous lines, *The Poet*:

And in bewilderment
My tongue shall tell
What mind had never meant
Nor memory stored.
In such bewilderment
Love's parable
Into the world was sent
To stammer its word.

What I shall never know
I must make known
Where traveller never went
Is my domain.
Dear disembodiment
Through which is shown
The shapes that come and go
And turn again.

Heaven-sent perplexity—
If thought should thieve
One word of the mystery
All would be wrong.
Most faithful fantasy
That can believe
Its immortality
And make a song.

THE poems not previously published in book form have been sub-divided by Mrs. Muir and Mr. J. C. Hall into those that appeared in periodicals before Muir's death or were sent by him to his publisher, those found in typescript after his death but never previously published or submitted, and those found only in manuscript. None of the poems is dated; but the first section alone bears out T. S. Eliot's seemingly cryptic statement, "old men should be explorers."

The opening religious sonnet may be so close to the poems rejected from *One Foot in Eden* as to make its inclusion a little puzzling; but it has a directness and informality of tone which the others lack. And it is counterbalanced by that ironic and subtle poem, written during Muir's year at Harvard, *The Church*, comparable in its complexities and reservations to Philip Larkin's *Church Going*; but Muir's allegiance not to any established rite, but rather

[5] From a broadcast in the Scottish Home Service. Quoted from J. C. Hall's monograph, *Edwin Muir* (Longmans, Green; for the British Council, 1956).

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to a Christianity still to be realised, makes it incomparably more positive in its conclusion:

I look at the church again, and yet again,
And think of those who house together in Hell,
Cooped by ingenious theological men
Expert to track the sour and musty smell
Of sins they know too well;
Until grown proud, they crib in rusty bars
The Love that moves the sun and the other stars.

Yet fortune to the new church, and may its door
Never be shut, or yawn in empty state
To daunt the poor in spirit, the always poor.
Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, may it wait
Here for its true estate.
All's still to do, roof, window, and wall are bare.
I look, and do not doubt that He is there.

The poem, *Salem, Massachusetts*, applies the same serious irony and almost satirical realism to the contrast between past witch-hunts and present "business men from Boston." As for Muir's concern with the future in these last poems—"old men should be explorers"—it distinguishes them not only from much of his earlier work, with its inevitably personal preoccupation, but from most of the work of his younger contemporaries. The visions of future cataclysms, *After a Hypothetical War, After 1984, The Last War*, and *The Day before the Last Day*, are only the most obvious examples. Even where the theme is retrospective, as in the strange sequence *Images*, the poem devoted to the transfigured memory of Muir's two brothers, or the soliloquy of his rakish cousin Sutherland in heaven, "There's nothing here I can take into my hands," Muir's resolution of his own conflicts allows him to explore new possibilities of mood, tone, and diction. The poem *Impersonal Calamity*, in fact, shows why a generalised sympathy, an "objective" or ideological humanitarianism, is powerless; what we have not known and suffered, we can neither comprehend nor relieve:

Respectable men have witnessed terrible things,
And rich and poor things extraordinary,
These murder-haunted years. Even so, even so,
Respectable men seem still respectable,
The ordinary no less ordinary.
For our inherited features cannot show
More than traditional grief and happiness
That rise from old and worn and simple springs.
How can an eye or brow
Disclose the gutted towns and the millions dead? . . .

Ballad of Everyman and *Nightmare of Peace* grapple with the related problem of men enslaved by the very ideologists who offer them liberation, only to "flatter and rob the ignorant clown." Muir's own capacity for sympathy, rooted in experience of hardships overcome, is evident in these poems; quite especially in *The Refugees Born for a Land Unknown*, with its insight into the deepest alienation of all, the loss of reality:

. . . And now with alien eyes I see
The flowering trees on the unreal hills,
And in an English garden all afternoon
I watch the bees among the lavender.
Bees are at home, and think they have their place,
And I outside. . . .

Petrol Shortage, like the earlier poem *The Horses*, testifies to the eternal recurrence in history, a pattern similar to that traced by Muir's personal life and vision:

The cycle will come round again,
Earth will repair its broken day,
And pastoral Europe dream again
Of little wars waged far away.

Plato, too, receives a final explicit tribute—*The Poet*, quoted above, was indirectly one—in what was almost certainly Muir's last poem, and it follows a tribute to his own beginning, a return to the source:

I have been taught by dreams and fantasies
Learned from the friendly and the darker phantoms
And got great knowledge and courtesy from the dead
Kinsmen and kinswomen, ancestors and friends
But from two mainly
Who gave me birth.
. . . . . .
And now that time grows shorter, I perceive
That Plato's is the truest poetry.
And that these shadows
Are cast by the true.

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NOTES & TOPICS

"Vulgar Sociology"

IN RECENT years Mr. C. Wright Mills has become a kind of faculty adviser to the "young angries" and "would-be-angries" of the Western world. Now, in a recent issue of the *New Left Review*, Mills has written a Manifesto for the "New Left." This statement, in the form of a letter, is regarded by the editors as "throwing us a number of challenging lines of inquiry." Presumably it is worth trying to understand what Mills is saying.

The task is not easy. A first reading of the article, and a second, leaves one a bit bewildered. The style is explosive, detonative rather than denotative, leading in all directions at once. (It reminds one of a vice-president of a large American union who used to tell an audience, "The other speakers, they talk to you in generalities. But I, I am going to talk to you at *random*!") The tumult is punctuated occasionally by interior monologues and dialogues; in these it is very hard to know when Mills is talking to himself, anticipating questions and answering them by exhortation, or when he is addressing the reader. The confusion is compounded by the fact that Mills has included in his "letter" some paragraphs from a new paperback edition of his book. *The Causes of World War III*, and these paragraphs, written in a nervous, staccato style

> Will they be evident enough? They will have to be very obvious to attract real American attention: sweet complaints and the voice of reason—these are not enough. In the slum countries of the world to-day, what are they saying?

contrast oddly with the semi-sociological rhetoric in the "letter" itself.

> 'But it's all so ambiguous. Turkey, for instance. Cuba, for instance.' Of course it is; history-making is always ambiguous; wait a bit; in the meantime, *help* them to focus their moral upsurge in less ambiguous political ways; work out with them the ideologies, the strategies, the theories that will help them consolidate their efforts: new theories of structural changes of and by human societies in our epoch.

It leaves one *à bout de souffle*—but perhaps it is that very onrush of words, that unvaried hammering, which gives it effectiveness as an emotional device.

The other barrier to comprehension is what the sociologists call "the conceptual apparatus." In social analysis one employs concepts because they group together objects or ideas, often seemingly disparate, in meaningful ways. For example: to a child, the only thing that a whale and an elephant have in common is their size; but a biologist calls them both mammals because of underlying processes (reproduction, respiration, etc.) they have in common. To be meaningful, a concept has to have fairly sharp boundaries so that one knows what is included or excluded by the term. Now Mills' key "concepts," used over and over again, are *structure* and *structural change*. But what these words mean is never made clear. Marxists used to talk in this way about "The System," and it might be this cosmic notion that Mills has in mind. But one never knows. What we get are penultimate sentences such as:

> If there is to be a politics of a New Left, what needs to be analysed is the *structure* of institutions, the *foundations* of policies. In this sense, both in its criticism and in its proposals, our work is necessarily structural—and so, *for us*, just now —utopian. [Italics in the original.]

Still, pressing through the clotted syntax and tangled underbrush of the writing, one dimly discerns four propositions:

> (1) There are a group of "NATO Intellectuals" (Mills' term) who, proclaiming the "end of ideology" have become, because of their incorrigible anti-Stalinism, defenders of the political and economic "status quo." These individuals are apparently grouped around ENCOUNTER and the Congress for Cultural Freedom.
>
> (2) The Russian intelligentsia (a number of whom were interviewed by Mills last summer) proclaim the doctrine of "socialist realism." These are the Soviet counterparts of "NATO Intellectuals." But both groups are really alike in that "both of these postures stand opposed to radical criticisms of their respective societies." Both are alike in that they engage in "criticism of milieux" not "criticism of the structure"—except that the Soviet authorities, who "are much more likely to be intellectuals (in one or another sense of the word—say a man who actually writes his own speeches) than are American politicians . . . *have* begun to tamper quite seriously with structural questions and basic ideology—although . . . they must try to disguise the fact."
>
> (3) The "New Left" is "on the move." This is evidenced by student demonstrations in Turkey, South Korea, Japan, Cuba, and England.
>
> (4) The "most important issue of political reflection" is that the "historic agencies of change" are now in question. "The historic agencies of change for liberals of the capitalist societies have been an array of voluntary associations, coming to a political climax in a parliamentary or congressional system. For socialists of almost all varieties, the historic agency has been the working-class—and later the peasantry. . . .
>
> "I cannot avoid the view, that in both cases

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> the historic agency (in the advanced capitalist countries) has either collapsed or become most ambiguous: so far as structural change is concerned, *these* [sic!] don't seem to be at once available and effective as *our* agency any more."

If the voluntary associations, or the working class, or the peasantry, are no longer the "historic agencies of change," what are? Mills' answer: the intellectuals. "It is with this problem of agency in mind that I have been studying, for several years now, the cultural apparatus, the intellectuals—as a possible, immediate radical agency of change. For a long time, I was not much happier with this idea than were many of you; but it turns out now, in the spring of 1960, that it may be a very relevant idea indeed."

It would appear that what James Burnham once did for "the managers," Mills may now try to do for "the intellectuals," whom he is appointing to the leading role on a "new stage" in history. And, as with Burnham, there is the same crucial vagueness of definition, for we are never told *who* the intellectuals are, other than that they write their own speeches (a curious problem perhaps, since Vice-President Nixon writes his own speeches and Premier Khrushchev does not), or other than that "in each of the three major components of the world's social structure to-day, the character and the role of the intelligentsia is distinct and historically specific."

WHAT IS MOST characteristic about these propositions, about the article as a whole (and, in fact, of so much of Mills' writing) is that no point is ever argued or developed, it is only asserted and re-asserted. This may be fine as rhetorical strategy, but it is maddening for anyone who does not, to begin with, accept Mills' self-election as an ideological leader. Since the strategy of rhetoric, rather than argument, is central to Mills' method, let us look at it more closely.

Mills is a "position player:" you don't debate, you "locate" your opponents on a field (and call it "sociology of knowledge"); and people then take positions on the basis of the label. In this game Mills has worked out the "theory of equation." In the 'thirties and 'forties, rhetorical debate was often carried on by the technique of "amalgam" or "guilt by association." You lumped your opponents in one camp (*e.g.*, the theory of "social fascism"). Now one makes equations: the Russian intellectuals and the NATO intellectuals are co-equal; they perform the same function on each side of the equation. Along with this, there is the view—which others have also expressed, basing the argument on the presumed common trends of industrial society —that America and Russia are growing more alike.

But are they? Mills is able to ignore any difference, because in his theory of the power élite, democracy (as with the use of the term "bourgeois democracy" by the Marxists in the 'thirties) is regarded as a sham. But does the Soviet Union permit magazines like *Partisan Review*, the *Monthly Review*, *Dissent*, and dozens of "little" magazines, which are critical of the "structure"? Would the Soviet Union print, say, Raymond Aron in as large an edition as it does books critical of the American "structure"? These are not "structural differences," Mills might say: if in the Soviet Union the Party controls the press, in the United States "big business" dominates the mass media. But even in "structural" terms, the argument fails, for if, as Mills insists, American politics is decided by the "élites," then it is a fact worthy of notice that the university élites, the publishing élites, and even the government-administrative élites are predominantly liberal—even though the term "liberal" may be far from Mills' frame of reference. (To a Mohammedan, all Christians, Catholic and Protestant, are alike.) But the major point is that the "élite" is not all of a piece, and any analysis of Russian and American society which ignores the political order—the existence in the one case of a single-party state ruled from the top, and in the other a pluralist society, divided, often unevenly (an imperfect society is not a sham!), by contending interest groups, makes a mockery of such basic terms as liberty and freedom.

The second strategy is to invoke the sanction of History. The "end of ideology" is "historically outmoded." The working class as a "historic agency" is "historically outmoded," and so on. Outmoded in what way? Is History so deterministic? (One thought that "history-making is *always* ambiguous.") History is, at best, a dubious measuring rod of achievement, but is it one of morality as well? Hegel made a distinction, as Isaiah Berlin reminds us, "between the 'historic' nations, and those unfortunate 'submerged' nationalities, which the more bellicose nations, chosen to 'play a historic role' in virtue of their superiority, had a 'historic' right to absorb and dominate." Does one accept events on the basis of inevitability or desirability? Mills never addresses himself to such questions. He stands, simply, as the caretaker of the dustbin of History.

The third strategy is a peculiar form of *tu quoque*. The end-of-ideology, he writes, "stands upon a fetishism of empiricism: more academically, upon a pretentious methodology used to state trivialities about unimportant social areas; more essayistically, upon a naïve journalistic empiricism...." Translated, this means: if you speculate and I write fact, you are being abstract

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and I am writing historical analysis—if you report facts and I am speculating, you are engaging in empiricism and I am writing theory.

IF THIS WERE ONLY a question of the style of a single article, hastily written and carelessly argued, one could simply shrug it off. But the point is that the article is all of a piece with Mills' larger work: certainly, his influential book *The Power Elite* has the same style, the same rhetoric. Mills, basically, is an American anarcho-syndicalist, a "Wobbly." His work is rough in tone, discourteous toward opponents, impatient of syntax, and this rock-throwing from the podium gives him a double appeal to the "angries." He is non-conformist, and he is also academic. What might be taken at first sight to be platitudes, if stated by an auto-didact, seems, in the context of portentous language (*e.g.*, "structural criticism") deep and learned. But the "Wobbly" influence is present not only in manner, but in content as well. *The Power Elite* is a "horror story" for intellectuals in the same way, and with not much more sophistication, that Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (with its picture of the all-powerful oligarchy) was for the socialist working man fifty years ago. And beyond content, the resemblances between the two lie most closely in the psychological meanings. London called himself a socialist, but his idol clearly was Nietzsche, and in his hero, Ernest Everhard, one saw the blond saviour, with his savage contempt, if not for people as a whole, then for the civilities of life. Mills, too, seems to be mesmerised by élites and power, and his argument—once elaborated in an article in *Politics*—that the intellectuals are "powerless people," points up the source of some of his resentments.

The term which gives his book its title *The Power Elite*, is not part of a theory of power but a catch phrase, a simplification which, like all such phrases, cheers the semi-skilled intellectuals who want a ready formula (this is the function of ideology) to explain complex events. For any analytical purposes, the phrase confuses more than it enlightens, because it erases the crucial differences between contending social groups—differences arising out of interests, ideas, policies, and purposes, differences which are the stuff of politics. The theory of the power élite is that changes in power are due to changes in structure. Thus he states that there have been no "essential" changes in America in the last half-century ("The recent social history of America does not reveal any distinct break in the continuity of the higher capitalist class"); and then, in bland contradiction, that in recent years the new feature of American life is that the three "structures" of power—government, military, and business—are now meshed into a "power élite." Vulgar Marxism has become vulgar sociology.

What this theory ignores is not only that government, military, and business are not homogeneous entities, and that each (especially the first two) are actually arenas of power in which different groups contend, it ignores the fact that even "structures" can be discussed only in terms of purpose, and that purpose is a function of interests and ideas—and these never come into Mills' analysis. To concentrate on "structure" (a species of "bourgeois formalism," one is tempted to say), is to become so abstract that one would have to argue, if Mills were consistent, that there were no differences, say, between Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt, between the America of 1920 and 1960. Black and grey may both be indistinguishable in the dark, but presumably the function of social analysis is to cast some light on events.

But most disturbing of all is Mills' failure to confront moral issues other than through the "judgment of history." If there is any lesson which emerges from the experiences of the last forty years, experiences which fashioned the "end of ideology," it is the realisation of the recklessness of social movements which sought to change the social "structure" without specifying the "costs" involved other than claiming that History would erase the bill. Neither "history" nor "revolution" can now demand the blank cheque they received a century or a generation ago, in the simplistic belief that rationality and progress would come in their wake. The hard-won lesson that dubious means—violence, terror, concentration camps, totalitarian power—can only befoul socialism, or humanism, or the dignity of the person, must not be lost because under-developed social movements, with no memory of the past, have once again become somewhat fashionable. As Freud once warned, what one fails to recall, one is doomed to repeat.

Daniel Bell

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No Stink of Zen

A Reply to Koestler — By CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS

IN THE August issue of ENCOUNTER Mr. Arthur Koestler wrote on "Yoga Unexpurgated." In the October issue the author turned his attention, not, as he claims, to Zen, but to the Zen Buddhism of Japan. He begins by describing the differences between Indian and Japanese character, culture, and psychology, and then turns to what he calls the religion of Zen. His main thesis is that the Zen School of Buddhism came into being, and has its place in Japan, "as a form of psychotherapy for a self-conscious, shame-ridden society, a technique of undoing the strings which tied it into knots." As the necessary opposite to the repressed, over-polite, codified rigour of a Spartan self-discipline in behaviour and thought, Zen Buddhism, with its relaxed, spontaneous release of the forces of creative life provided an escape from an intolerable tension. From over self-consciousness to a direct awareness, however rare and brief, of no-self, with the minimum of thought or feeling to intervene between impulse and act, here is the truly simple and spiritual life which the Japanese so sorely needed: "When walking, walk; when sitting, sit, but don't wobble; when hungry, eat; when tired, sleep." "You say that you are bound? Who puts you under restraint?"

It may well be that Zen Buddhism has served this function in Japan, but it does not account for Zen Buddhism and is no account of Zen. Yet Mr. Koestler errs in good company. In 1953 Dr. Hu Shih wrote an article on "Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in China, Its History and Method," to which Dr. D. T. Suzuki replied. A summary of Dr. Hu Shih's article, and Dr. Suzuki's reply, appear as Chapter V in *Studies in Zen* (1955) which I compiled from articles written over fifty years by this great authority on Zen, an authority in that he combines profound scholarship with personal enlightenment. In his article Dr. Hu Shih wrote:

> The Ch'an (Zen) movement is an integral part of the history of Chinese Buddhism, and the history of Chinese Buddhism is an integral part of the general history of Chinese thought. Ch'an can be properly understood only in its historical setting just as any other Chinese philosophical school must be studied and understood in its historical setting.

Dr. Suzuki would have none of it. For him a clear distinction must be made between Zen and Zen Buddhism, for the former can never be tied to the accidents of its historical setting.

> Zen must be understood from the inside, not from the outside. One must first attain what I call *prajna-intuition* and then proceed to the study of its objectified expressions. To try to get into Zen by collecting the so-called historical materials and to come to a conclusion which will definitely characterise Zen as Zen, Zen in itself, or Zen as each of us lives it in his innermost being, is not the right approach.

For Zen, he adds, "has its own life independent of history."

Note the distinction. Dr. Hu Shih is trying to bind Ch'an (in Japanese, Zen) to the history of China, where this uniquely direct and powerful school of Buddhism was born, grew up, and reached its greatest heights; Mr. Koestler wants to bind it to Japan. Both seek to confine the dawn wind in a definition, the flow of a river in the forms of its banks. But the "Essence of Mind" of Zen, which is No-mind, has no history. "Let the Mind abide nowhere." When the Ch'an school did arrive in Japan, five hundred years later, it had passed its zenith, yet in the warrior culture of Kamakura (13–14th c.), where it was adopted by the Samurai as a mental discipline ideally suited to a man of war, it was born again, and thenceforth played a leading part in the culture of Japan. But the fact that warriors adopted it no more makes of Zen Buddhism a bloodthirsty religion than Christian knights on a Crusade reduce thereby in value the teachings of "gentle Jesus."

WHAT, THEN, is Zen, as distinct from one of its modes of expression? I can speak with no more "authority" than Mr. Koestler, though I may have studied the subject longer than he both in England and Japan. But at least I would not lightly use such terms as "mumbo-jumbo" and

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"hocus-pocus" of the technique devised by a thousand years of Zen masters for rousing their pupils to attain their first *satori*, that is, a flash at least of direct awareness of Reality, beyond, far, far beyond the highest achievements of conceptual thought. Still less, after thirty years' study would I use the word "drivel" to describe the sayings of masters who were clearly doing their utmost to lead their followers to a state of spiritual awareness which I for one admit that I cannot achieve by thinking.

For Zen means enlightenment, and supreme Enlightenment is the nature and the very heart of Buddh-ism. The "ism" is man's erection of thought and comment about the *buddh* or Enlightenment which made of Gautama, an Indian prince, the Buddha, the all-Enlightened, all-Awakened One; and *satori*, one name for the first experience of such enlightenment, is the goal of the training given in a Zen monastery. Without this Enlightenment there is no Buddhism, much less Zen Buddhism, and the Way of Zen in the total field of Buddhism is the supremely direct Way of achieving that Enlightenment.

It follows, and this is the step most intellectuals are unwilling to take, that, in Dr. Suzuki's words, "Zen is beyond the ken of human understanding; by understanding I mean conceptualisation." It is literally beyond thought, beyond the reach of thought, beyond the limits of the finest and most subtle thinking. For it is, by its very nature, beyond the realm of duality; it is not One any more than it is Two; it is non-duality. It does not try to "unhinge the rational mind," as Mr. Koestler says. It arrives when the process of thought has reached its exhausted conclusion. When thought, infuriated, baffled and at last aware of its futility, gives up, then suddenly, unmistakably comes—what? A unique, utterly personal, and incommunicable awareness, in a flash (as Mr. Koestler rightly says, of the intuition) of THAT which is beyond description because it is beyond the plane on which description, which must use the symbols of duality, can function.

How CAN such an experience, whether minor or major, be chained to the accidents of history, of time or place? And how can a master, who KNOWS what he knows, assist his pupil to attain that same ineffable "moment?" He cannot argue, explain, describe; these need words, and words are symbols in duality. He can but prepare the pupil with Spartan training of body, control of emotion, exhaustion of thought up to that cleansed and subtle state of mind, exquisitely balanced between all "opposites," clinging to nothing, caring for nothing, wanting nothing, in which a blow, a joke, an absurd because non-rational gesture, even a "tremendous silence" may cause the "existential leap" from a world of commonsense to a state of nonsense/super-sense in which, though nothing is new, all things are suddenly seen as new, and the whole world is perceived as "right," in which "It's all right," and we can now have tea.

But what can the intellect do about all this save to be cross about it? For it can only know about Zen, never know it. And Mr. Koestler's annoyance, with Zen and with himself, will not avail his understanding; only the fact that he would rather live in this "juxtaposition of extremes" which is Japan, than anywhere else out of Europe should tell him that when, like a terrier sniffing round a hedgehog, he has annoyed himself enough he may try the task, enormously difficult, of laying aside the clumsy machine of thought, and trying a little nonsense, illumined nonsense, intuitive delight, instead.

THIS AT LEAST is what some of his fellow intellectuals in Europe are doing, refusing to believe that Zen is either Chinese or Japanese. Zen Buddhism in Europe has reached a point of no return, and a problem has arisen which is not yet solved. It needs a highly skilled and enlightened teacher to assist us to break through our own thought-barrier, yet why should any such from Japan, much less a dozen, spend time and energy on a half-prepared, however enthusiastic few? A handful of students are going to Japan, but the expense and difficulties are enormous. What, then, are we to do? We cannot heed Mr. Koestler, for experience tells us that even the first steps in Zen enormously clarify the mind, release the forces of life within and make of each moment a thing of perpetual adventure and new-found joy. So we prepare ourselves, as best we may, for some solution, believing that "When the pupil is ready the Master appears." I have set out in *Zen Comes West* the method of self-preparation which some of us use, which refuses to look on Zen as Chinese or Japanese or bound to any time or place. Zen is not a religion, nor a philosophy, though it uses a wide range of Buddhist Scripture in its background, but even the minor "moments" reached by some of us make the effort, sustained and concentrated effort, well worth while. Perhaps Mr. Koestler would like to join us? There is nowhere to go and nothing to attain, for as he knows we have it all already. Nevertheless we have found it true, in drinking tea and arranging flowers, or in making a bed or running a business, that there is one rule to be obeyed: as a Master said when asked, "What is Zen?," "Walk on!"

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Labour, Loyalty, and the Left

By Henry Fairlie

THE Labour Party to-day seems to be losing all sense of how to take a political decision. Nine years after it lost power, it is rapidly becoming a party which, to all intents and purposes, is uninstructed in the techniques of politics and of government. A whole generation of Labour leaders have, in this time, been removed or have removed themselves, leaving only two, Mr. Hugh Gaitskell and Mr. Harold Wilson, who can claim any experience either of Cabinet or of leading a major department. This is a situation which can only become worse, the longer the Labour Party is in opposition. It could well prove to be a more serious obstacle to re-uniting and re-forming the party than any of the factors which are more generally discussed.

When the Liberals regained power in 1905, after ten years in opposition, Campbell-Bannerman was able to include in his Cabinet seven men who had served in Rosebery's Cabinet ten years before. When the Labour Party at last gained power in 1945, for the first and only time, all its leading figures had held prominent positions in the Coalition Government during the war. It is precisely a body of accumulated experience of this kind which the Labour Party lacks to-day. Moreover, it is the totally inexperienced whom the rank and file of the party insist on electing most regularly to positions of importance within the party: men who are dilettantes rather than serious politicians. This is the behaviour of a party which has ceased to be interested in political decision and the cares of government, and the clearest evidence that this is what has happened is the contempt in which the Labour Party to-day holds its leader and the electors.

THE FIRST TASK of a party in opposition is to offer the electors an alternative prime minister. After all, the only real choice before the electors is the choice of a prime minister, since they cannot, once he is elected, directly influence the formation either of his government or its policies. Moreover, it is the only intelligible choice which the electors can make. Although the concept of party images is a convenient piece of shorthand, it has been absurdly overdone in the past few years. The clearest image of a party is the party leader himself: it is certainly the image which the electors most readily recognise. The most important political act which a party can perform, therefore, is to choose a leader and give him publicly at least some measure of the trust and respect which it appeals to the electors to give him. It is this which the Labour Party has steadily refused to do during the past nine years.

The place of loyalty in politics is a difficult one to analyse. Politics is far too serious a business to allow considerations of personal loyalty to be over-riding: it is, quite rightly, since the issues at stake are momentous, a ruthless business, in which it would be criminal to allow anyone to continue to hold office when his usefulness had passed, merely because one did not want to hurt him or his feelings. But, if there is a limit to loyalty, there is a limit also to disloyalty. The electors are entitled to assume that the leader of a party, whom they are asked to elect as prime minister, will normally be able to rely on the support of those who choose to serve under him. They are entitled to assume this because, if he cannot rely on this measure of loyalty among his colleagues, far too much of his (and their) time will be consumed by political intrigue. Loyalty to an elected leader is, in fact, the one effective check which can be placed on political intrigue, and the electors rightly assume that a party in which this common loyalty is absent is a party in which intrigue has got out of hand.

THERE is ample evidence that this is exactly what has happened in the Labour Party during the past nine years. The evidence is to be found not only in the treatment which Mr. Hugh Gaitskell has received at the hands of his party and at the hands, particularly, of some of his closest colleagues. (He has been given a normal measure of support only for the length of one brief election campaign, and that was withdrawn almost immediately afterwards.) It is to be found also in the fact, for which every political journalist will vouch, that it is always easier to get a good story out of Labour M.P.s than it is to get one out of Conservative M.P.s. Full accounts of what has taken place at private meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party are regularly published the following day. A full account of what has taken place at a meet-

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ing of the 1922 Committee is a rarity. Much the same kind of evidence is to be found in the memoirs which have been published by former Labour Ministers. These have been informed by a degree of personal malice towards former colleagues which suggests that all the natural bonds of loyalty within a party have broken down. Sir Anthony Eden, by contrast, must have some pretty sharp things to say about the behaviour of some of his colleagues during the Suez crisis, but he has withheld them. However galling this may be to the inquisitive, his reticence is proof of exactly the kind of political maturity which one has ceased to expect from the Labour Party.

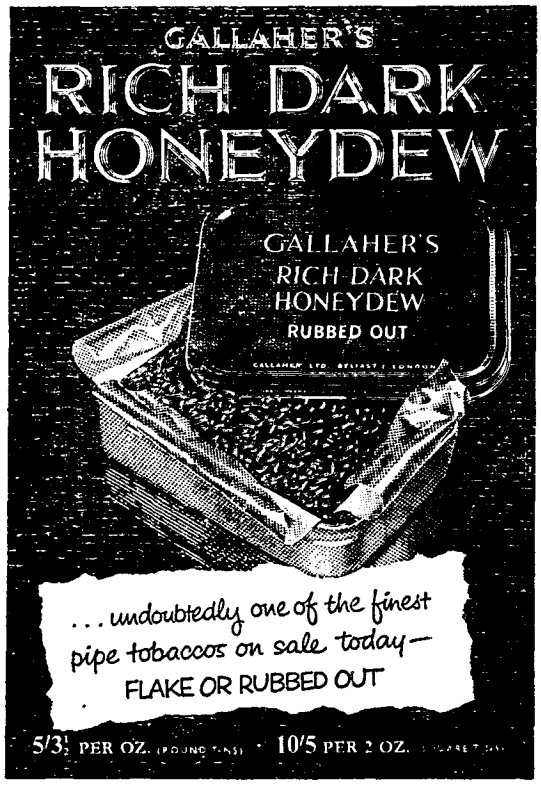
LOYALTY MAY OR MAY NOT be a virtue in politics, but it is certainly a necessity. Almost every other political decision which has to be taken becomes meaningless, if one cannot assume the kind of personal loyalties which alone make difficult decisions generally acceptable. Joseph Chamberlain's description of the atmosphere inside the Liberal Government of 1880 precisely describes the spirit which is lacking in the Labour Party to-day:

> Differences of opinion showed themselves from the first, and frequently threatened to break up the Government. . . . Throughout its existence, its members were frequently called upon to defend in the country resolutions from which they dissented or to which they gave only a qualified approval. At the same time there existed a very good feeling on both sides and there was an anxious desire to remove differences and to secure unanimous agreement by mutual concession.

It is only in such an atmosphere that it is possible to reach serious political decisions at all, and that atmosphere depends on a normal loyalty to one's colleagues, of which loyalty to one's leader is the greater part. Without the discipline of such loyalty, every serious political struggle is reduced to a matter merely of personal intrigues and flamboyant personal gestures, and the consistent development of policy becomes an impossibility.

For one thing, resignations become normal, instead of the exception. A resignation is usually a futile political act, because it is, more often than not, the result of a serious miscalculation by the person who is resigning, the most usual miscalculation being to assume that he is indispensable. But, if most resignations are futile, none surely is more futile than that which claims to promote the unity of a party by an open act of disunity. (The only justification of a resignation, surely, is that it is intended to divide a party, or make it aware of a division which already exists.) Yet the claim to be promoting the unity of their party was made both by Mr. Anthony Wedgwood Benn, when he resigned from the National Executive Committee of the party, and by Mr. Anthony Greenwood, when he resigned from its Parliamentary Committee. It is hard to believe—at least, one must make this allowance for them—that either of these two young men would have behaved in this peculiar manner if they had had any real experience of handling men or affairs.

BUT resignations of this kind are symptoms of more than inexperience: they are symptoms of the general state of mind of the Labour Party to-day, which encourages frivolous personal gestures instead of the patience of which any political decision is largely composed. "The patience of politics:" the phrase was used once to me by Mr. R. A. Butler, when he was discussing his own political struggles. It is a vivid phrase, which expresses much of the quality of free government. There is no room at the centre of politics, although there may be at the fringes, for impatient gestures: there is room only for patient co-operation between colleagues who may not like each other but who need each other, under a leader whose ultimate right to lead is loyally accepted. A party which can



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provide neither that patience nor that loyalty is well on the way to becoming a fringe party, for the general body of the electors cannot be expected to interest themselves for long in the public posturings of men who do not accept the tedium, and will not practise the reticence, ot power.

The self-indulgent habits of a Labour Party conference are an example of this dislike, this fear, of the limitations imposed by power. When the day's debate on nuclear disarmament ended at the conference in October, many Labour M.P.s, most of them from the Left wing, claimed that it had been the first real debate on the subject anywhere in the world—as if the only debate which matters is public debate. "We were the Parliament of the World, this afternoon," one of them said to me, presumably not forgetting that the General Assembly of the United Nations was meeting simultaneously in New York. So it may be. But I cannot be the only person who is growing more than a little tired of the Labour Party's habit of holding sincere and eloquent debates on a subject—when the decision has already been taken.

Nor can any debate for long retain much political interest when the party which so solemnly conducts it shows no equal gravity in taking the steps necessary to bring it back to power. One may be numbed by the boredom with which Mr. Macmillan publicly speaks of great issues of policy, but, in the end, even this is more interesting, since his words carry to the chancellories of the world, than forever listening to the Labour Party carrying on its own intimate debate with the Social Democratic parties of the world (most of them disrupted and out of office), and then, if the Left wing had its way, only with their most disruptive elements. One would have thought that the example of the Social Democratic parties of Europe during the past fifty years—their inability to gain power, or use it fruitfully, because of their fear of power—would have been a sufficient warning to the Labour Party in Britain. Instead, the Labour Party—or, rather, its Left wing—seems anxious only to follow their example.

This attitude, as I hinted at the beginning, implies a deep contempt for the electors. When a member of the Left wing says, with a suitable display of moral indignation, that he is not prepared to make any concessions in order to gain power, he is in fact saying that he places no trust in the instincts and the broad judgment of the electors. It is curious that this contempt for ordinary people exists to-day on the Left and not on the Right. It would have been impossible for the Conservative Party, after its defeat in 1945, to re-form and re-organise itself, if it had contemptuously said that the electors had chosen wrongly, and that therefore no concession must be made to them. Instead, under Mr. R. A. Butler, the Conservative Party started from the assumption that the electors had chosen rightly: that it was the Conservatives who had been at fault, and not the people. The Left wing of the Labour Party, since 1951, has never once considered the possibility that the electors may have been justified in returning the Conservatives three times running, and that their judgment ought therefore to be taken into account.

The Left wing, the unilateralists, have, in fact, ceased to address the electors at all, being content only to address their supporters, or those whom it is easy to make their supporters. This is seen even in the way in which a man like Mr. Michael Foot addresses even the Labour Party conference. For the first fifteen seconds of his speech last October, he seemed to remember that he was addressing conference and not a *Tribune* rally; but, in the sixteenth second, he forgot conference, and we watched a performance which might have whipped up the enthusiasm of convinced unilateralists but had nothing to do with carrying conference with him. Indeed, Mr. Foot's style of oratory to-day sometimes suggests that he is addressing no one but himself. He rarely looks to the front as he speaks, rarely looks his audience in the eye, but screams from right to left, as if he were practising at a dressing-table with side mirrors.

It is, I would have thought, a reasonable proposition that one of the few acceptable justifications of democracy is that the mass of the people have a broad, instinctive knowledge of where their long-term interests lie. It is a more controversial but, I still think, reasonable proposition, that an efficient two-party system enables the electors to make use of this knowledge. The justification of the two-party system is that, by enforcing responsibility on both parties, it encourages both of them to pay attention to the numerous factors—the nation's commitments, the inescapable physical conditions of the nation's life, the national habits of mind and behaviour—which party politicians are otherwise apt to ignore. The two parties ought to be, in the full sense of the term, national parties, not sectional interests or factions of opinion, should express, in different ways at different moments, the national mind or temper.

Neither party ought, like so many parties in

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Europe, to cut itself off either from national interests or national sentiments. They should, however strong the pulls to make them something else, be the instruments of those interests and those sentiments. The electors may from time to time change their opinion as to which is the most effective instrument for the needs of the moment. That is their task, and that is their skill. To this extent, they can educate the parties, as much as it should be the task of the parties to educate them. It is an unwillingness to be educated by the electors which is the main fault of the Labour Party to-day—and the fault, in particular, of the fundamentalists, who will arrogantly hold to their dogmas, whatever the shrewd and careful electors may say. A party which announces regularly that it refuses to be instructed either by its leader or by those whose support it solicits, is a party which has chosen to secede from the nation. Whatever the mistakes Mr. Gaitskell may have made, he remains the one leader in the Labour Party who can bring it back to the nation, and teach it that no political decision can seriously be taken by a party which dislikes the people. It is an odd lesson for a Left wing party in Britain to have to learn.

Letter from New York

An Odd Lot

In preparation for this New York "Letter," I have been scissoring little items from the newspapers, with a passion of which Mel Lasky himself would not have been ashamed, and I now sit amidst a depressing jumble of clippings everyone of them throwing some kind of light upon Our Way of Life, but what they add up to I'm at a loss to say. There's that engineer, Mr. Eric Hamilton, who at the age of 44 issued his private declaration of independence:

> "You work five days, friends in for cards Saturday night, barbecue Sunday night, fight to get ahead, all that stuff. I finally decided the old rat-race wasn't worth it."

One sympathises, in principle, though it does sound like an awfully cosy kind of rat race. Anyway, Mr. Hamilton bought himself an army surplus amphibian "duck" for $4,000, packed his wife and four daughters on board, and set off for an extended tour around Latin America. This flight from the affluent society has cost him $10,000 so far, not counting the price of the "duck," and if there isn't some sort of moral here, then morals aren't what they used to be. And then there is what happened on the Garden State Parkway in New Jersey, when the toll collectors were instructed to say "thank you" to each passing motorist, which innovation so affected the motorists that they became positively maudlin, thanking the collectors profusely in return, sometimes backing up to do so; the upshot of this high-minded reform is that traffic on the Parkway is now in one perpetual snarl, with the Parkway authorities threatening to discipline motorists who don't keep moving. And then there is the fact that the Department of Labor's "cost of living" index now includes the price of tranquillisers. And then, on the other hand (or *is* it the other hand?), there are those three advertising executives who have just created a firm to manufacture and market a new brand of cigarettes, called simply Brand X. The slogan for this cigarette is, *"For The Man Who Is Satisfied With Nothing Less Than The Second Best,"* and one of the founders has explained: "Our cigarette is for the man who as a boy dreamed of becoming Vice-President...." The first ad for this new cigarette will appear in the December issue of *Playboy* magazine and will read:

> "The back of your hand to polls, charts, graphs. Take your stand with Brand X—the cigarette that always comes in second. No exclusive blends; no secret ingredients; no roasting, toasting, or pan-frying. This is an ordinary cigarette—for extraordinary people. Costs a little more—but remember it promises a little less."

I suppose that one ought, on the basis of items such as these, to be able to discourse eloquently on Conformity and Ambiguity in America; but I appear to have no appetite for it right now. Besides, our Dwight Macdonald is at this moment with you in London, and he's so much better than I am in defining and decrying the endless aspects of modernity, that I fear to be seeming to compete with him.

Shall I tell you instead of my experiences as an American capitalist? For I have become one, you know. Some little while ago I decided that I had achieved an age and a station which made it appropriate for me to own a piece of my country, and so I took our skimpy savings and invested them in the stock market. As it turned out, my stockbroker also bought me a piece of someone else's country, which was extremely fortunate, as I would otherwise to-day be that ludicrous figure, an American Capitalist *sans* capital. For no sooner had I settled back into my newly-acquired status than Wall Street came tumbling down, and stayed down, with a disgracefully un-American lack of bounce. Natur-

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ally, my curiosity was aroused, to put it mildly, and I've been looking into this system that I've now become an integral part of.

One of the first bits of information I came across is that, large as I may figure in my own eyes, I am in truth but a tiny part of an odd lot. What I mean is, an Odd Lot—that's a technical term. An Odd Lot, on the stock market, is a bundle of fewer than one hundred shares, and Odd Lot transactions receive the closest kind of scrutiny from the experts. Indeed, there are learned books that concern themselves with Odd Lot Theory, there are "intelligence services" that give tips based on this theory, the Odd Lot Indices are published prominently on the financial pages—it's a big thing, I assure you. Well, I'll spare you the intricacies and technicalities, because they all boil down to one simple concluding proposition: what the common man, the small investor, is doing is terribly important for the reason that the common man is almost always wrong. When he starts vigorously buying, this is a sign that the market is probably on its way down; when he starts selling, there are grounds for optimism. You can imagine how humiliating all this has been for me—not, I confess, because it offends my sensibilities as a common man, but because I have for years now been trying to persuade myself (and others) that I am not a common man at all. And there I am, a dutiful, anonymous item in an Odd Lot! I have, of course, taken immediate corrective action. Only yesterday I purchased, and am already half-way through, a new best-seller, *How I Made Two Million Dollars in the Stock Market*, which explains in detail all those fallacies a small investor is tempted to commit, and must energetically avoid. It seems like a splendid book; but I am worried by the fact that it is, after all, a best-seller. If all the fools become wise, how is a wise man going to make any money? This paradox disturbs me, and I do believe ENCOUNTER would be performing a public service if you could get Andrew Shonfield, or Anthony Crosland, or Nicholas Kaldor to resolve it to my satisfaction and ultimate profit.

It goes without saying that this Odd Lot business is pregnant with implications for any theory of democracy, and in particular a "property-owning democracy." But leaving that large subject for another time, I do want to report a bit further on my confrontation with American capitalism, for this was a moment of truth as regards not only political theory but economic reality as well. Like most intellectuals, I have had certain clear and preconceived notions about how capitalism works in America. The economy is dominated by an interlocking directorate of Big Business which, while preaching competition and "free enterprise," manages things to suit its own convenience and, sometimes, the common good. Unlike my friends on the Left, I have not been outraged by this state of affairs, since it always seemed reasonable to me that something as important as Big Business should be managed by hard-faced professionals rather than by, say, the editors of the *New Left Review*. I did want to see the monopolistic power of these professional managers curbed and regulated; but that they *had* such power, I never doubted for a moment—which is why it appeared sensible to me to buy stock in Big Business, sharing their wealth as it were. How wrong I was! And what a shock to discover that, not only is American business actually competitive, it is positively cut-throat! The things that have happened to my own poor Big Businesses.... True, there isn't much old-fashioned open-price competition (though there is a lot of ingeniously disguised price-cutting); but even when cigarettes all cost the same price, the cigarette companies still scramble furiously for the available market. And they are not, as I thought, an exception to the general rule. I was appalled to learn that it was possible for the stock of U.S. Steel and DuPont to drop 30 per cent—and to learn, too, that it is conceivable the drop is more than temporary, because technology is producing new products and processes (*e.g.*, plastic replacing steel in automobiles, fibre-glass replacing plastics in small boats, pressed paper replacing nylon in shirts, etc.), that challenge the old—and to learn still further that my giants are impotent to suppress or appropriate these dangerous innovations, as I had taken it for granted they would do. What kind of way is that to run an economy? If capitalism cannot give reasonable security to us capitalists, it is surely doomed, don't you think?

I APOLOGISE for bothering you with my troubles—but, then, what are friends for? Nor do I want you to get the wrong impression and to think that the stock market really means anything to me. It's only that... but no, let's not begin all over again. There are so many truly important things to write about. The elections, for instance: the Democrats and Republicans have once again put up candidates, one of whom will have been elected by the time you read this. And the race situation, which gets more complicated with every improvement. And there's a new study of the Sacco-Vanzetti case from which it appears that they may have been guilty after all, as if things weren't confusing enough. And...

But excuse me, I really must get back to that best-seller, if I'm ever to transcend my Odd Lot, my all-too-human, condition.

Irving Kristol

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A Short View of Musil

By Frank Kermode

WITH the publication of the third instalment of the Wilkins-Kaiser translation,* *The Man Without Qualities* is once more, and this time with a certain casualness, as if the battle was won, being referred to as one of the great novels; Musil, we are told, is of the company of Proust and Joyce. Formerly his reputation had seemed to be, like the lights sailors call occulting, characterised by periods of total darkness. He was famous in Germany for a while, around 1930, when the first volume of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* appeared, but the second came out just as the German-speaking world suffered a transference of attention to Hitler, who could easily be presented, if anybody wanted to do it, as the anti-mask of Ulrich, the Man Without Qualities, the active passivist, the perceiver of modern consciousness, as so delicately dissociated that the combination of an inferior intellect and a fixed idea could bring us all to barbarism. On Musil's sixtieth birthday, in 1940, no one paid any attention; after his death in 1942 his widow with the help of the *"Musil Gesellschaft"* (a group which contributed to a fund for the writer's support) brought out the remainder of the work, so far as it had gone, in a privately printed edition. In the 'fifties there was a revival of interest, though still of somewhat fluctuant quality. Nobody is *ashamed*, yet, of not having read the book. The campaign continues, and by now the whole 2,000 pages (there is no way of knowing how long the work would have been had Musil lived) are available in German, and four-fifths of it have appeared in English. So it ought to be possible to make up one's mind.

I myself knew nothing of Musil except *Young Törless* (1906) a gloomy, impressive, cerebral first novel about physical and metaphysical misbehaviour among students at a military academy at Bohemia, translated by Wilkins-Kaiser in 1955. Consequently some of the reports on the big book surprised me, especially the publisher's claim that it was "extremely funny," which some reviewers endorsed. Now that I have read the first three volumes I am still inclined to take issue with this and other judgments, for example Mr. Toynbee's "It is an integrated, minutely planned book." How could he tell after one volume? Even after three it is impossible as it were to cash the story; we have seen the beginning of a change of state, of characters in the process of significant collapse, of ironical developments which will give substance to the huge gas-clouds of argument which billow round the narrator; but they haven't got far, and some of them were prevented from ever doing so by the death of the author. And he wasn't, in any case, in any ordinary sense, a *minute* planner; and, finally, the first volume taken alone gives an entirely misleading impression of the whole. So Mr. Toynbee seems this time to be as far off the mark as Miss Wedgwood, who unintelligibly refers to the book as "picaresque;" perhaps she means only that it is *not* "minutely planned." On the other hand Mr. Toynbee is quite right, I think, in saying that Musil was often very boring, purposely, and would not, I suppose, be put out to find that his belief in the virtue of this is not universally shared.

The fact is that he started with a narrative plan that would enable him continuously to perform certain acts not very intimately related to narrative. This plan he of course modified as time went on; there was a certain cross-influence between the story and the theme as each burgeoned. But having got the main outline settled he was free to compose his vast interstitial essays, to devise his prolonged metaphysical conversations, in the confidence that he knew

* *The Man Without Qualities.* By ROBERT MUSIL. Secker and Warburg. Translated by Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser. Vol. I (1953), 25s.; Vol. II (1954), 25s.; Vol. III (1960), 35s. Vols. I and II correspond to Vol. I of the original; Vol. III to the first part of Vol. II. The unfinished part of the original Vol. III will be Vol. IV in the translation. My references are to the volumes of the translation.

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exactly where he was, and what was the exact nature of the relationship between these static passages and the forward-moving story. He could even, up to a point, do them in whatever order he liked; thus, the extant chapters of the last volume are not consecutive and there are large gaps between the complete sections. So you could speak of careful, indeed of elaborate, but not of minute, planning. And you might reasonably go on to infer certain qualities and defects in Musil as a novelist. One such inference would be that he is not likely to achieve much narrative tension, density of plot, or economy of structure. And this is useful information to anybody starting on Musil. Whether or no one counts the absence of these qualities as a defect depends on whether one is of Erskine's or Johnson's opinion concerning Richardson. Erskine, it will be recalled, found him "very tedious;" but Johnson replied: "Why, Sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment." Musil looks right back to those early days; the form of his novel is, in this sense, atavistic.

YET IT is so in a most sophisticated way; and that at any rate aligns him with the contemporary *avant-garde*. It was mechanical form he disliked, though he had much too critical a mind to accept any organicist theory; he was indeed extraordinarily acute about the place of concealed metaphor in thought, and this is one such. Musil, therefore, regarded himself as free of these categories and qualities; he was the man without them, the artist, like Ulrich, on holiday from reality or what passed as reality with others. He was quite open about his contempt for narrative; at the outset—or anyway on p. 199, for Musil is a slow starter—he assures us that no "serious attempt will be made to . . . enter into competition with reality." And he was explicit about his lack of interest in stories as such, exhibiting, when he spoke of his novel, what we at once identify as the "oh-dear-yes" response to the question "does it tell a story?" In the course of the novel this reaction is given some philosophical ballast, when Ulrich, the Man Without Qualities, has the following chain of thought: we live in a time when life, both as lived and as taken up into propositions about itself, has undoubtedly grown more abstract; I would not have it otherwise, since out of this abstraction grows power; with an intellectual leap I hence come upon another important abstraction, namely that

> the law of this life, for which one yearns, overburdened as one is and at the same time dreaming of simplicity, is none other than that of *narrative order*. This is the simple order that consists in one's being able to say: "When that had happened, then this happened." What puts our mind at rest is the simple sequence, the overwhelming variegation of life now represented in, as a mathematician would say, a unidimensional order.

And this the novel has turned to account; we do not like what is intensely here and now; the most complexity we can comfortably bear is a very little "because" or "in order that," such as goes to a novelist's plot. We like a straightforward sequence of facts because "it has the look of a necessity," and this gives an impression of order—as well, of course, as the sense that nothing need be done about it. But Ulrich had "lost this elementary narrative element" and saw things more as they were; "in public life everything has now become non-narrative, no longer following a 'thread,' but spreading out as an infinitely interwoven surface."

As a matter of fact, Musil's views on how this came to be so, on what one's abstractive powers are called on to do about it, and on a series of loosely related subjects, are clearly more important to him than the rendering of the texture; and, of course, since that texture has lost its narrative character—which was after all what made novels possible—this was the only way he could see to write about it at all. Some of his characters might be stupid or ignorant enough to behave as if the old narrative way of thinking, and all the un-fluid attitudes that went with it, still worked, and this would give the oh-dear-yes story something to bite on; but for Ulrich and Musil such behaviour simply created a loose textural mesh in which their volatile opinions would be beneficently trapped, like warm air in a string vest. One of those characters, Clarisse, has a brilliant thought out of Nietzsche, and Musil's comment upon it is a good negative indication of the way both he and Ulrich do their thinking:

> The ready-for-use or "applied" philosophy and poetry of most people who are neither creative nor, on the other hand, unsusceptible to ideas consists in just such shimmering coalescences of another man's great thought with their own small private modification of it.

Musil has no interest in great thoughts, only in what might be called the activity of consciousness; an activity paralysed in most people because of their willingness to inhabit the shelters provided by a multitude of metaphysical fictions. And these are the very things that have set up the frontier posts between mind and reality, on the dangerous ground between which Ulrich operates; and are responsible for the curious solemn apathy with which the world

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faces the uncategorisable catastrophe of the 1914 war. His business, Musil's business, is not with truth.

> I state my case, even though I know it is only part of the truth, and I would state it just the same although I knew it was false, because certain errors are stations on the road to truth.

MUSIL had been a soldier, an engineer, a mathematician and a philosopher before, under the pressure of a "ruthless impulse"—as the English translators put it—he became an artist. If I say this is very unlike the career of our own James Joyce it is not simply because the comparisons between these two strike me as absurd, but because Joyce once said, with a certain weird accuracy, that he had the mind of a grocer's assistant, and one can see in his works such a mind transformed by a manic literacy. Musil's is a mathematician's mind similarly transformed. There is an interesting scene in *Törless* where the young man is troubled by imaginary numbers like the square root of minus one, and the mathematics master can't get outside his familiarity with them to explain, out of his own made-up mind and body, to Törless in his adolescent indefinitiveness, how they can be related to anything describable as truth or order: "we have not the time . . . a little beyond you." It was the end of instinctive youth: "to-morrow I shall go over everything very carefully and I shall get a clear view of things somehow." Somehow by rejecting the made-up mind, the great thought, by evading the patterns that mesmerise others, Musil tries for his clear view of everything; and a lot of his trouble is to ensure that this includes the square root of minus one, an imaginary, useful quantity which facilitates movement about a whole world. When they sack Törless at the end, his peculiar curiosity is called "morbid" by the maths master and "sensitive" by the chaplain. The Head gives him his chance; is the Chaplain right, is Törless especially sensitive to "the divine essence of morality that transcends the limits of our intellect?" Is he, in short, seeking religion? No, says Törless, and begins a stumbling explanation of his own consciousness that approaches the frontier of mysticism; and that is the end of him. In so far as he was Musil, however, it was only the beginning; and the really curious thing about the structure of *The Man Without Qualities* is that, in the manner of mathematics, it domesticates the irrational and the imaginary, describes the failures and successes of a consciousness that depends in part upon both. As to reality, Ulrich can only represent it ironically, since he has dissociated himself from the usual ways of knowing it. Reality has sacked him, "daylight mystic" as he is, and like Coriolanus he turns round and sacks reality. Musil in his turn thought the novel as a form corresponded to a failed myth of reality and so he sacked it, writing instead essays with a narrative binding. The novel fights back, and it is Musil who fails.

THIS HE ADMITTED, for in spite of his contempt for narrative he saw that he had provided it too sparingly in the first two volumes; and there is no doubt that the third volume, which opens with significant events occurring in reasonably rapid succession, is altogether more successful than the first two. Indeed, its first third has a persistent, surprising *novelistic* brilliance which convinces the reader that Musil was, or could have been, a novelist of quite extraordinary power. For the most part, however, *The Man Without Qualities* is written as if to illustrate one of Ulrich's theories, called "Essayism;" just as ordinary novels reflect the myth of narrative, this one reflects the theory of the essay. Ulrich is thinking of himself, in his relation to the world, as "a stride that could be taken in any direction, but which leads from one instant of equilibrium to the next." These balanced moments are not hypotheses but *essays*—because an essay

> in the sequence of its paragraphs, takes a thing from many sides without comprehending it wholly—for a thing wholly comprehended instantly loses its bulk and melts down into a concept.

This is using the word "essay" metaphorically; but when the novel itself assumes this quality of Ulrich's mind, the figurative significance of the word disappears and it is transformed into ordinary-language "essay" again. It is as if a man who argued that Sir Winston Churchill's view of life, which he endorsed, could only be called "epic," felt obliged, on writing Sir Winston's biography, to do it in blank verse. Musil, as it happens, is extremely interested in metaphor; the mental breakdown of one of his characters, Clarisse, is heralded by a failure to dissociate certain metaphorical significations from the basic meanings of words. So one doesn't, of course, accuse him of not knowing what he was doing; nothing could be more ridiculous; but it is possible nevertheless to say that an essay is an essay. Indeed there are large tracts of the book which remind one of an Addison liberated from conventional morality and a respect for great thinkers, fitting Sir Roger and the others more subtly into his moral disquisitions, and endowed with a degree of intellectual agility he might formerly have thought unseemly.

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MY EMPHASIS on the essayism of the book may sound strange to anybody who has heard only that it is a satire on the Austro-Hungary of 1914, and that it helps to explain the war.

It is easy enough to see how this got about, but it is a very partial and distorted account of the book, based on the opening thousand pages, which are merely a prologue to the real story. They do say quite a lot about "Kakania," as Musil calls the Empire, and about its ruling class; as his main point is that they were all hopelessly out of touch with contemporary reality, it is also true that the presentation is frequently satirical. But it is precisely in this connection that he claims not to be competing with reality. He is not writing what Mary McCarthy recently called the only proper kind of novel, one with historical people and issues in it. (This is true regardless of the fact that he drew on actual persons, places, and issues.) He certainly thought that all these people, while they were being noble and clever in absurd and archaic ways, were leaving the subman to flourish unobserved; and that this was a state of affairs out of which the catastrophe of 1914 would issue quite naturally. But their antics, and indeed the war itself, interested him only as illustrations of an abstract notion that the modern mind generally was unable to grasp its environment. And that is a matter not of high comedy but of essayism. Each of the principal characters represents a version of this mental failure, and is thus related to the essayistic flow.

For all that, there is a sense of time and place, communicated with considerable and characteristic indirectness. This makes for bulk. The sheer size of the book is naturally the first thing one notices. Musil's whole method makes bulk inevitable, not because, as with Tolstoy, the population of events increases in geometrical progression, but simply because there is no event that can ever be finally dealt with. Each chapter has an old-fashioned humorous heading, and the first one is: "Which, remarkably enough, does not get anyone anywhere." The first useful statement of the novel, "It was a fine August day in the year 1913," is preceded by a mediæval chronography of about 150 words. The first direct speech ("'Frog-prince!' she said.") is on page 51. There's nothing wrong with size, even if one disagrees that its function is to give the writer room to be boring in; but it is worth considering the contrast between this kind of thing and the brisk opening of *Anna Karenina*—on which Miss McCarthy recently commented in the same brilliant lecture—"Everything was upset at the Oblonskys." Indeed it is hard to think of any good, let alone great, novel, that begins so uneconomically. The loose volubility

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of those opening words, considered in relation to what comes of them in terms of narrative, is typical of the relation between essay and narrative in the book as a whole, and one is always struggling to see the activities of the characters as embodying rather than merely exemplifying, as doing more than providing texts for secular sermons.

THE story concerns Ulrich, the Man Without Qualities, and his dealings with various groups of people in Vienna just before their spiritual and intellectual limitations met a proper requital in the war of 1914.

Ulrich, ex-engineer, mathematician, officer, having tried and failed to see the relevance of the particular myths of order enjoined upon him by these professions, is on a holiday from all such, and is undertaking a sort of reappraisal of the metaphysical problems their failure evidently raises. That is, he is temperamentally and intellectually distanced from all that goes on, and always ahead of the game, whether that is big business, thinking, diplomacy, or sex. At the instance of his father he becomes involved in the Collateral Campaign, an aristocratic but vague attempt to make plans for the celebration in 1918 of the seventieth anniversary of the Emperor's accession. Everybody concerned with this is an example of a particular kind of failure to treat closely with reality. Count Leinsdorf has hopes that there may be a fusion of the races in the Empire, and re-birth of national energy from bourgeois culture. Arnheim, a tycoon of lofty moral tone and a bit of a spellbinder, who, as a German, should not be on the Committee at all, is working for a union of economics and the soul. General von Stumm, another who is there by mistake, and a very engaging figure, wants a bit of military commonsense in the Campaign, and draws up staff college plans and lists of Great Ideas. The spiritual leader of the campaign is a cousin of Ulrich's nicknamed Diotima, wife of a high War Office official, whose cast of mind is very sceptical, in a traditional way; Diotima is a noble spirit, and engaged in a profound but innocent affair with Arnheim. The Committee meets from time to time, every crank in Austria sends it some infallible and absolute remedy for all the nation's ills; at one point it almost provokes public disturbances. Ulrich abandons it for various reasons, and in the end Diotima's dream is reduced almost to ridicule before the war wipes it all out anyway.

A secondary group of characters is headed by Walter and Clarisse, friends of Ulrich, she a wild Nietzschean, he an artist *manqué*, not permitted to sleep with her and soaking himself in Wagner as a compensatory indulgence. They have on the premises a fake sage called Meingast. The other most important character is the sexual murderer Moosbrugger, in whom nearly everybody is forced to take an interest: even Ulrich's father, concerned with the legal issues of the case, the Austrian equivalent of the MacNaghten rules. Clarisse is especially concerned, and as her own madness grows, arranges through Ulrich to visit the madhouse where Moosbrugger is kept, pending a decision. There are other minor figures, doctrinaire anti-Semites, bankers, poets, all held together by Ulrich. But two more must be mentioned before one can ask more generally what Musil does with all this: the woman nicknamed Bonadea, charming but nymphomaniac wife of a legal official and Ulrich's mistress; and Ulrich's sister Agathe, whom he meets at the start of the third volume when he travels to his father's funeral, not having seen her since she was a child.

ALL THESE PEOPLE are posed in a pretty static way, and the collateral campaign is naturally given satirical treatment, even if the satire is often toothless. At the end of the first volume one is inclined to ask, "Is this all?", because as straightforward social and political satire it is simply not sharp enough. But of course the real point is slowly crystallising out of the essay-cloud: the Campaign is a useful example of that intellectual futility, that uncritical adherence to insufficiently examined absolutes, ideas of order, panaceas, of which Ulrich's agile scepticism is the antithesis. "Without doubt he was a man of faith, though one who believed in nothing." This antithesis occupies Musil throughout most of the first two volumes; only with the third, after the encounter with Agathe, does he begin seriously to move forward. It is like one of those chess-games when the masters for an incomprehensibly long time make fiddling little moves at the back of the board, and then suddenly a queen leaps out. The queen is Agathe. The love between Ulrich and Agathe is what gives, or was to have given, the story sublime sense. But as it is, the reader is not, even at the end of Book Three, in possession of an extremely important fact. Ulrich we have seen in various sexual situations, but in bed only with Bonadea; before it is all over he has slept also with Diotima, Clarisse, and Agathe.

SO FAR AS THE NOVEL has got in English, these events, among others, have occurred: Diotima has developed sexological interests, greatly to her husband's concern, and is consulting Bonadea on the practical side. Clarisse has been to the asylum and seen the patients, though not Moosbrugger. Agathe has forged a codicil to

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her father's will, in order to cheat her husband (a lot of essayism about this). Before the end Diotima will overcome her high-minded objections to adultery; Clarisse will herself go mad and procure the escape of Moosbrugger, who will kill another woman before recapture; the Christian thinker Lindner, whom we see briefly consoling Agathe as she contemplates suicide, will take a hand in the plot; Arnheim will acquire a non-platonic mistress; the Campaign will collapse. These, of course, among many other matters.

Now it is clear that the two poles upon which the whole narrative turns are Moosbrugger and Ulrich. Moosbrugger—and it would be impossible to overpraise the imaginative achievement of Musil in the rendering of his mind—has the double function of pharmakos and symptom. He can be held to be a case of *victimage*—an idea taken up by Clarisse—expiating the sins of others; or his condition and his escape can signify those atavisms which we are intellectually impotent to contain, and the catastrophe of their enlargement. Around him rages the question of "responsibility," but it is treated in the absurd jargon of academic lawyers, not as a problem demanding all the freedom and power of a mind such as Ulrich's. Moosbrugger is the subman, guiltless but fatal to society; if a whore irritates him he kills her, and supposing you make a Moosbrugger powerful he will kill all the people who irritate him, for example, by being Jewish. "If mankind could dream collectively, it would dream Moosbrugger." His escape coincides with the collapse of the Collateral ideals. He thinks, when he is not killing, that he is holding the world together by his own gigantic strength; he is dazzled by insights of order, calm, and beauty.

Ulrich, who saw as a schoolboy that the world's mood was the subjunctive of potentiality, calls himself a possibilitarian, being easily aware of

> the well-known incoherency of ideas, with their way of spreading out without a central point, an incoherency that is characteristic of the present era and constitutes its peculiar arithmetic.

As a *person* he is as far removed from any legal or conversational category as Moosbrugger, and it is immediately after a long satirical treatment of the lawyers' argument on responsibility that he is arrested and reflects with some annoyance on police descriptions, which somehow enable him to be identified, even when he feels quite different, being sometimes tall and broad (when angry or making love) and sometimes slim and soft (when floating jellyfish-like in a great book). But what distinguishes him from Moosbrugger is the mobility of his intelligence; and what makes him different from all the others is his awareness of the disappearance of the old patterns of knowledge, the penetrability of all the old fortifications by which we keep reality out of our daily lives.

And this is the main intellectual impulse of *The Man Without Qualities*: it begins with a series of statements concerning the modern failure to contain reality, and proceeds tentatively to examine causes and deride cures: but it also gropes towards some positive therapy. This may not seem an enticing topic for a novel, and I myself, though confident that another reading would be very illuminating, have frankly finished with this book for ever; but it may be helpful anyway to abstract its programme and set it baldly down.

In the first place, knowledge itself is a disease: "the compulsion to *know* is just like dipsomania, erotomania, and homicidal mania... it is not at all true that the scientist goes out after truth. It is out after him. It is something he suffers from. The truth is true and the fact is real without taking any notice of him." But we can't hope for a quietist solution; we live in a period of transition (this flat, irritating remark actually means more in Musil's context than usual) and must adjust ourselves before the horizon rushes upon us. Ulrich agrees with the passionate Hans Sepp (though deploring his Germanic mystery-religion) that we cannot afford "character," that acting by settled conviction is the death of knowledge. He tells Agathe that "on the frontier between what goes on inside us and what goes on outside there's some communicating link missing nowadays, and the two spheres only transform into each other with enormous losses in the process." What with external changes and wild alterations in human conduct, "reality is abolishing itself," says Ulrich; and he even declares a will to abolish it finally, or to settle for a life that is to reality as metaphor to truth, or literature to fact. "You are the kind of person," says Walter, "who declares that the meaning of fresh vegetables is tinned vegetables." "I dare say you're right. You might also say I'm the sort of person who will only cook with salt," Ulrich replies. The relative importance of different aspects of reality is determined in an entirely arbitrary way by the degree of attention given them; and in this chaos it is impossible for an intelligent man to be convinced of anything, so that—and this is one of Musil's profoundest observations—

> the vigour required to believe in new movements in art and literature, and countless other things [is] wholly founded on a talent for being at certain hours convinced against one's own con-

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> viction, for splitting a part off from the whole content of one's consciousness and for spreading it out to form a new state of entire conviction.

In the domain of morality this mental condition produces a great many problems, notably that "the *distinction* between Good and Bad loses all meaning when compared with the pleasure to be got from any pure, deep, and spontaneous mode of action—a pleasure that can leap like a spark, both from permissible and from prohibited actions." Hence the sheer pleasantness of Bonadea as she moves, by a funny, inexorable law, from habitual respectability to bed; hence too the huge, subtle, ethical issues raised by Agathe's forgery and her incestuous affair with Ulrich. "Individual cases cannot be decided morally." "All moral propositions refer to a sort of dream condition that's long ago taken wing and flown away out of the cage of rules in which we try to hold it fast." In the wonderful twelfth chapter of the third volume Ulrich delivers himself of a credo, ending:

> I believe that some day before very long human beings will be—on the one hand very intelligent, on the other mystics. Perhaps our morality is even to-day splitting into these two components. I might also call it: mathematics and mysticism —practical amelioration and adventuring into the unknown.

It is hardly surprising that the General finds difficulty with these ideas.

> The Minister wants to know what an ethos is. An eternal verity . . . that is neither eternal nor true, but valid only for a time so that the time has a standard to diverge from.

Stumm can make his own adjustments; Ulrich's way of "dethroning the ideocracy," of getting away from what are satirically called "structive conceptions of the world" (as exemplified by Expressionism), is to move out into new, exciting, dark territory, the borderland of mind and reality, where dwell high intelligence and intuition also; where metaphor and univocality, literature and life, dream and waking, march with each other on a wild frontier; where he is "inconclusively at home in two worlds at once."

THIS "BORDERLINE" Musil had sketched as early as *Törless*; it has nothing to do with the supernatural, but a great deal to do with the power of the intelligence to understand that it always has with it as a permanent problem, of which the contours perpetually shift, the fact that there exists what it is unadapted to grasp. When Ulrich and Agathe begin to grow to their union, Musil warns off the profane: he is starting on "a journey to the furthest limits of the possible and unnatural, even of the repulsive . . ."—a "borderline case," as Ulrich was later to call it, "one of limited and specific validity, reminiscent of the freedom with which mathematics at times resorts to the absurd in order to arrive at the truth." And the study of this borderline involves, as a first requirement, explanations of the natural limits of modern consciousness.

Here Musil displays a qualified orthodoxy. A fruitful, unitive attitude to reality can, like Paradise, only be imagined as something once possessed and now lost. In language that reminds one of Cassirer, Ulrich explains to Agathe that the power to identify oneself with the object belongs to dream, myth, poetry, childhood; it would be in our world a step back into an old symbolic mode, and it would involve "a reduction in reality." If "nothing is any longer entirely there," there is no way back except by a sacrifice of intelligence he is not prepared to consider. And the way forward is also hard. Agathe has a Yeatsian vision of unity of being, of a sainthood like water gently welling over the rim of a fountain.

But before one goes on to the subject of Musil's mystical interests, there is an important and saving qualification to be noted. From the start he will have nothing to do with that potent modern myth which goes in this country under the name of "dissociation of sensibility." He deals with it very early, jeering at those who "were prophesying the collapse of European civilisation on the grounds that there was no longer any faith, any love, any simplicity, or any goodness left in mankind." "It is significant," he continues, "that these people were all bad at mathematics at school." The development of purely intellectual disciplines ("the wicked intellect") he will not allow to be a disaster; and one of the jokes about Diotima is that she talks about "a unity of religious feeling in all human activities that has been lost since the Middle Ages." On the contrary, Musil rejoices in the unparallelled "precision, vigour, and sureness" of mathematical thinking, and is harsh on all kinds of wanton primitivism, all the proposals for improvement submitted to the Committee which can be classified as "Back-to" this, that, and the other.

The innocent proto-Nazi, Hans Sepp, is significantly associated with this kind of thinking, and indeed its irruptions into politics are usually the occasion for violent unpleasantness of one kind or another. No, Musil-Ulrich was not a "back-to" man, and indeed enjoyed modern life, New Men, and especially New Women. He shows a nice sense of the curious period immediately preceding that with which he concerns himself, when, out of the established atti-

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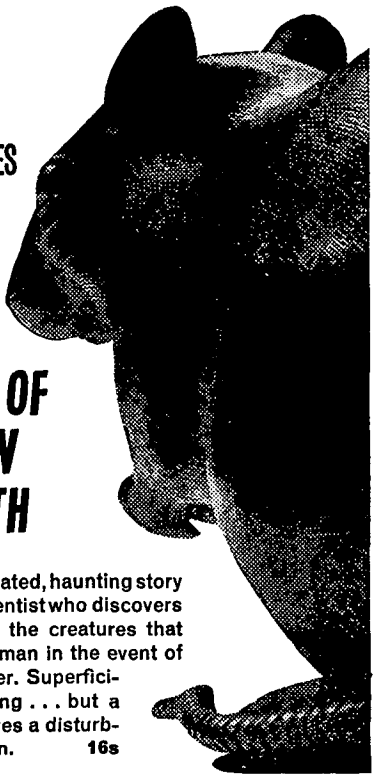

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tudes of the dying century, rose the ghosts of their antiselves. The decadence of Europe was not to be explained in these sentimental ways, but grappled with, an almost impossibly elusive fact.

YET Musil was admittedly interested in mysticism; he kept a notebook on the subject. This was a "daylight" mysticism, concerned with "the becoming one of this and that" (Miss Wilkins' phrase) as it actually occurs, subject and object, intellect and imagination, male and female. This is an old theme; as Aquinas put it, *sensus est quodammodo ipsa sensibilia*. Yet the failure of modern consciousness, for Musil, is precisely a failure to give it the right treatment. Hence this notebook on mediæval mysticism, headed "Border-line Experiences." He argues ingeniously that a great deal of the energy required for the handling of these experiences now goes into sport, "a contemporary substitute answering to eternal needs," and calls boxing a kind of theology because it places within a cage of rules a number of reactions so complex as to defy analysis. Another usurper is art, and especially music, Walter's escape route. And what is really to be learned from the mediæval mystics is that they are not in the least vague and warm, but write of the phenomena with the analytical ruthlessness of Stendhal; of the direct experience of God they can, however, say nothing except metaphorically, and the usual source of their metaphors is extreme sexual pleasure. Their example may be of assistance in the business of grasping that mysterious moment in normal perception "before vision and feeling separate and fall into the places we are accustomed to find them in;" what is certain is that we cannot find a better metaphor. Ulrich is even willing to accept the myth of a sexual offence or change of attitude as the explanation of the fragmentary nature of our truth; he can, in a sense, accept the Fall and Original Sin.

Musil's continuous interest in various aspects of sexual play (the Major's wife, Greta, Clarisse, Rachel, Diotima's maid, the exhibitionist outside Clarisse's house, the prostitute who accosts Ulrich, above all his sexual relations with almost every important female character) seems somehow not to have attracted much attention. Yet it is central to his whole idea. There is an early chapter called "Explanation and interruptions of a normal state of consciousness" which describes Ulrich's reflections after he and Bonadea have made up a quarrel and gone to bed.

> The incredible swiftness of such transformations, which turn a sane man into a frothing lunatic, now became all too strikingly clear.... This erotic metamorphosis of consciousness was only a special case of something far more general; for nowadays all manifestations of our inner life, such as for instance an evening at the theatre, a concert, or a church service, are such swift appearing and disappearing islands of a second state of consciousness temporarily interpolated into the ordinary one.

And with the Major's wife he experienced, as a young officer, "an unutterable state of being," explicitly analogous to that of the mystic. There is a notion, also, that anything like intellectual equality, and so tension, between lovers, is destructive of love; and a somewhat Shavian suggestion that man might be capable of a condition of permanently heightened consciousness exactly analogous to the sublime pleasures of the bed. But what is certain is that the dividedness of the modern mind is constantly, in this book, expressed in terms of sexuality, so that disorders of consciousness become disorders of love. And this is where Ulrich's sexual activities, with whatever degree of seriousness he takes them, become significant. With the third volume sex assumes ever-increasing importance, with Diotima's researches and the coming together of Ulrich and Agathe; and, as we have seen, before the end this element will predominate.

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THIS IS A DEVELOPMENT, therefore, from an epistemological to an amative interest; and this gives the story altogether more suggestive power. The erotic lives of Arnheim and Tuzzi, for example, the sexual limitations of Moosbrugger and the poet Feuermaul, make sense in relation to their public faces. And a topic so thoroughly mythologised as love breeds myth. Diotima, so nicknamed because of her high ideals of love, looks throughout the static part of the book like a slightly comic but charming Aphrodite Ourania; Bonadea, called after the goddess whose ritual developed into erotic orgy, is Aphrodite Pandemos. But Diotima's Campaign collapses, and she herself, having acquired a lot of equivocal information about love-making, takes Bonadea's place in Ulrich's bed, a terrestrial Venus after all. Ulrich's desire for his sister represents another kind of love, what the Platonists would call an urge to identify oneself with the beautiful as well as desirable, and there is that conformity between them, represented as a striking resemblance, which is indispensable to the union of knower and known. Clarisse, in her madness—even her language is "borderline"—seeks union with a symbol of union, a Greek homosexual whom she thinks of as a hermaphrodite. Operating on the borderline between subject and object, Musil uses, as an illustration of this suspicious frontier-friendship, the inexhaustible metaphor of sex; great myths that are older than Plato break into the fiction.

IN THIS aspect of Musil's art one sees yet another scrap of evidence that he was astonishingly well equipped to write a great and coherent novel; the very story that he somewhat despised begins to assume in his mind an incalculable profundity.

He has other qualifications: great gifts of metaphor (the detection of resemblances, Aristotle's criterion for genius), and these are extremely important in a novel so much concerned with the relation of metaphor to fact; the power of being unexpected, yet delightfully right; a gift of aphorism. All this could be illustrated over and over. And yet, in the end, one's reaction to the claim that his stature is comparable to that of Proust and Joyce is simple incredulity. If we were speaking of the men themselves, I suppose it would be reasonable to say that Musil had as much sheer brain as the two of them together. As a novelist, he is simply not to be thought of in their company. The reason is that they were also working on a borderline, one that Musil, in his preoccupation with others, gave too little care to: the vast, vague frontier of fiction.

The operations of Proust and Joyce caused no breach; those of Musil do so. He was a great man, and everybody should find out why; but he is also the interesting limiting case, for if ever, to change the figure, if ever we supposed that there was no limit to looseness and bagginess in the novel, this protean and apparently boundless monster, Musil proves the contrary. There *is* a point at which a novel turns into something else: a metaphysician's miscellany, interspersed with subtle *exempla*.

"That Poor Little Swinburne"

The Yale Edition of the Swinburne Letters. Edited by CECIL Y. LANG. Volumes 1 and 2. *Yale University Press*: London, *Oxford University Press*. 84s. the two.

SWINBURNE is that rare thing, a Victorian classic who, after a period of neglect and contempt, has *not* been rehabilitated.

On the whole it is true to say that the Victorian counter-revolution is now complete. For obvious reasons, all the major Victorian artists, like all the major Victorian men of action, were rejected and scoffed at during the period of reaction which lasted roughly from 1910 to 1930. Since then, it has been realised that the Victorians had certain special problems to face and that they made a brave and, occasionally, successful attempt to face them. With very few exceptions, the Victorian writers and artists are now back in esteem; if they are not quite restored to their original positions, they are at least placed higher than seemed possible thirty years ago. But Swinburne is one of these exceptions; perhaps, indeed, the most notable of them. He went out very soon after his death in 1909, and has never come back.

It would be a pleasure to try to give Swinburne a hand-up. But unfortunately, it just isn't possible. This, surely, is a case where the Victorians were wrong and we are right. Who would maintain, to-day, that Swinburne was a major poet or even a considerable one? (Mr. Lang would, but then he has devoted years of his life to editing Swinburne's correspondence, and it is a well-understood rule of literary procedure that an editor always over-rates the man he edits.) Swinburne, to put it bluntly, had neither an interesting enough mind nor a strong enough character to be a good poet. He had a strong imagination—using the word in its

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simplest sense, the power of being emotionally moved by scenes and persons not actually present —and a fairly good ear. This ear he employed in the formation of a style which was intended, presumably, to rejuvenate 19th-century English poetry and which only succeeded in making it look like a pantomime dame, heavily rouged and mascara'd.

By the 1860's, the metres and stylistic conventions of English romantic verse had been in continuous use for half-a-century, and they were getting tired. The mid-Victorian generation had, with some success, rung the changes on the standard stylistic repertory; but it was becoming difficult to find any new changes. Being wise after the event, it is easy for us to see that the only real remedy was that of Hopkins: a radical re-thinking, which led to the formation of a completely new style. Swinburne's answer to the problem was entirely the wrong one. He sought to ginger the old forms up, by tremendous injections of alliteration and assonance, and by setting everything to a jingling tune that passed for "verbal music." It wasn't music, of course, except in the sense that a barrel-organ is music, but to a certain kind of second-rate poetic mind, it was an irresistible influence. (Kipling, for instance, formed his style on a basis of Swinburne; so did Chesterton.)

The result, still speaking bluntly, was a mess. One does not want to judge Swinburne too harshly; we shall all be judged, in our turn, and we shall all wish for leniency. Swinburne did his best, and it is not his fault that his best was not very good. Let us treat these letters as interesting minor Victorian documents, and leave it at that.

For those interested in the byways of Victoriana, Mr. Lang has performed a service; and when the six projected volumes of this edition are completed, that service will stand out as a memorable one. It is the more to be regretted that Mr. Lang could not have made his offering a little more modestly. His "Acknowledgments" begin with the words:

> This book was written under the shelter of academic bowers, with every convenience but amidst distractions that seem to me the very antithesis of the soft obscurities of retirement. It could not have been completed without the assistance of the learned and the patronage of the great.

Faced with this, I am obliged to say, first, that Mr. Lang did not "write" the volumes now before me. He edited them. There is a difference, and I am speaking on behalf of those who know the genuine agonies of creative effort when I draw attention to that difference. It is true that Mr. Lang obviously considers Swinburne's letters to be his, Mr. Lang's, own book; he dedicates the edition to no fewer than five people, one of whom is dead; but for all his confidence, he errs. Secondly, I object to Mr. Lang's use of a passage from Dr. Johnson's great Preface to his Dictionary. The passage in question, in case you do not have it by you, is this:

> In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that much likewise is performed; and though no book was ever spared out of tenderness to the author, and the world is little solicitous to know whence proceeded the faults of that which it condemns; yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it, that the *English Dictionary* was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow.

That passage, with its magnificent harmonies and its noble acceptance of the suffering that its author was undergoing and had undergone, is one of the best things in 18th-century literature, and Mr. Lang would have shown his taste better by resisting the temptation to work it into the sampler of his own prose, just as he would have done by reminding himself that he did not "write" Swinburne's letters. But there is worse in store. Johnson's Preface ends, as everyone knows, with:

> I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds: I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.

Mr. Lang's Acknowledgments end:

> I have not been hurried by eagerness to the end, but though I have protracted my work, I will not protract this preface. With one paralysing exception, those whom I wish most to please are alive and in the prime of life, and I await their judgment with anything but Dr. Johnson's "frigid tranquillity."

Altogether a bad case of Johnson-itis. All this wouldn't be worth drawing attention to, if there were not a matter of principle involved. Editors do useful work, and they deserve (and readily have) our thanks; but they should not give themselves the airs of real writers, they should not dedicate other men's writings to their friends (I remember an American reviewer, I think Stanley Edgar Hyman, being moved to say that at this rate we should have the next editor of Shakespeare dedicating the Sonnets to his baby daughter), and, above all, they should not take the name of Johnson in vain. And now, back to our *moutons*.

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THESE FIRST TWO VOLUMES cover Swinburne's correspondence from 1854, when he was seventeen, to 1879, when he was thirty-eight. This, of course, was the "wild" period of his life, when he was giving rise to naughty gossip, and publishing poems that made wise old heads shake with regret. In view of this, the thing that emerges most strongly is the utter uneventfulness of his life. As he quite candidly wrote to an Italian critic when over thirty, "Except the publication of my different books, there has been no event in my life worth a mention or a date." He drank too much, of course, and there is a hint (no more) that he might have had an affair with an actress; but broadly speaking, even in this early unfettered period, when Theodore Watts-Dunton was only a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, everything that happened to Swinburne happened inside his head. His adventures, his vices, his triumphs—it was all behind the forehead.

This in itself is not without historical interest, since no modern person could have such a long succession of eventless years. By the later 19th century, English middle-class life had reached such a point of security and calm that it was too much for the bolder spirits to stand; they erupted all over the earth in search of hardship and danger, climbing mountains, exploring jungles, slaughtering wild animals by the hundred. Swinburne had no taste for this kind of thing, but it is arguable that his taste for smut (collecting documents about flagellation, etc.) was his puny version of the same thirst for adventure. He remained utterly immature, unable to grapple with life on an adult level, and most of the "shocking" writings he has left are merely pathetic illustrations of this. When he was in his thirties, an acquaintance, Bayard Taylor, wrote a sensible sketch of his character, which seems to cover the main points:

> . . . instead of being a prematurely blasé young man o' the world, he is rather a wilful, perverse, unreasonably spoiled child. His nature is still that of the *young* Shelley, and my great fear is that it will never be otherwise. He needs the influence of a nature stronger than his in everything but the imaginative faculty—such a nature as Byron's was to Shelley. Again, a clear-headed and -hearted woman could cure him of his morbid relish for the atrocious forms of passion. He has a weak moral sense, but his offences arise from a colossal, unbalanced affectation.

And finally: "he is sensitive, hugely ambitious, and utterly self-absorbed—which things have wrought disease. If I did not think so, I should never wish to see him again."

It is a familiar enough story. We have all met people who resemble Swinburne; they are particularly common among minor poets. My own guess is that Swinburne might have made a better adjustment to life if he had been born in humbler circumstances and thus avoided being sent to an English public school. It was Eton that warped him beyond recovery; nothing that happened to him in later life was as exciting as those days of friendships, verse-making, and —above all—flogging. It is impossible to read far in these letters without coming across a reference to what was obviously, for him, the most wildly exciting thing in the world—violent stimulation of the buttocks. He drags the subject in wherever he can, if only by saying of a howler in one of his own writings that "it is a mistake for which a schoolboy would be flogged." And there are some correspondents, notably George Powell (a rather sinister Welshman) and Lord Houghton, to whom he had presumably made an avowal of his neurosis about flagellation, and to whom he can pour out the complete contents of his imagination.

This, for instance, is his way of asking Houghton to judge leniently something he has published:

> Please, Sir, don't hit very hard this time—I haven't been swished yet this half, you can ask my tutor—and he says I'm not the worst boy in my division. I do think it's no end of a chouse

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for a fellow to be swished for his verses when he showed them up in time for school and there were no false quantities in them I'm sure. At least you might let a praepostor pick the buds off.

...I will tell Payne (pretty name for an usher) to send you the material of flagellation at once. It is rather hard to have to supply the twigs destined to make my own posteriors writhe and bleed, but I know it's the way of the school. I have been well flogged some four or five times already for the same fault. Tennyson and Jowett, the *Athenaeum* and the *Spectator*, have each had their innings. Twice I have been swished in private, and twice in public before the whole school—for "irreverence." My skin has the marks of the birch still on it. Pray remember this, and don't lay on too hard. My bum has been brushed often enough.

The interesting thing here is not so much the business about flagellation, which is common enough, but the obvious fixation on school-life. Swinburne never outgrew a schoolboy's emotions (*cf.* his hero-worship for Mazzini, about whom he talks in exactly the same strain as a Lower Fourth boy about the captain of the First Eleven), and at one point in these letters he even makes up a fictitious pair of cousins at Eton, and sends to a friend a "copy" of a letter from the elder describing the tortures undergone by the younger.

My dear Algie—I must tell you about the young 'un—it's worse than ever this half—He was swished 3 times last Friday, & once every day the week before. His bottom is like a plum pudding—every bit of flesh is a bloody red weal where it isn't a long slicing cut," &c., &c.

ALL THESE quotations, of course, come from Mr. Lang's edition. And we need look no further for the explanation of Swinburne's failure to achieve lasting work as an artist. Viciousness does not prevent a man's becoming a good poet, but hopeless, rooted, fixed immaturity does. He has remained a poet for the juvenile, for exactly the same reasons as those which caused everyone who met him to underestimate his age, or to comment on his half-fledged appearance. Lord Lytton wrote to his son, after meeting Swinburne at a house-party: "He says he is 26; he looks 16—a pale, sickly boy, with some nervous complaint like St. Vitus' Dance." And Thomas Woolner, who was present when, at another house-party, Swinburne fell down in a fit at the breakfast-table, wrote: "That poor little Swinburne had a dreadful fit yesterday at Lord Houghton's. From all accounts he seems to lead a sadly wild and unwholesome life. He made a great commotion, as you may imagine, at the breakfast table among the assembled guests."

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whether Swinburne's misfortunes and indiscretions are capable of making "a great commotion" any longer. Still, his letters illuminate many odd corners of Victorian literary life, and it will be pleasant to have them complete.

John Wain

The Way We Live Now

Take a Girl Like You. By KINGSLEY AMIS. *Gollancz.* 18s.
The Bachelors. By MURIEL SPARK. *Macmillan.* 16s.

IT IS a hard life being an English humorist. We all have it so firmly fixed in our minds that we are a nation of potential red-nosed comedians that any writer who shows signs of cheerfulness is instantly seized upon by critics and publicists as an opposite number in a cross-talk act. "Well, old boy, old boy," you can hear them saying, "what's going to have us in stitches to-night? No, I haven't heard the one about the young girl of Milford Haven.... Oh, very good, old boy, very good!" Indeed, so predictable is the reaction of a certain section of those who record their opinions that it frequently has the air of occurring in advance of the joke itself, an illusion which recalls the captive roars of laughter emitted by a studio audience. Very nice for the humorist, this, in a way. But let him beware. Should he try to make his humour that much more subtle, should he venture to introduce a serious theme into his books, then his robot readers will look at each other in dismay. "Old so-and-so getting a bit pi, eh? Off colour to-day?", and the faces will grow long and puzzled like those of men finding themselves at the Old Vic when they had expected a strip-tease club.

Something of this sort seems to have happened to Kingsley Amis. I find it difficult to explain in any other way the lack of understanding—the total lack of any attempt at literary analysis—shown by one or two of the notices of his new novel, *Take a Girl Like You*. For it seems to me quite evident that this is a very good book and its author's best to date (incidentally, it is also just as funny as the others). But the complexity of its view of human nature and the subtlety of its main theme have evidently been too much for reviewers all set for an Aldwych farce of the 'sixties.

The story is simple. Jenny Bunn, a young and, as yet, virgin school teacher, comes to work in a town lying just outside London. There she meets various people, among them Patrick Standish, Lothario and grammar-school master, whose love-making is usually conducted with a decent mixture of present appetite and future remorse. He falls for her and wishes to sleep with her. She has old-fashioned ideas about remaining in her present condition until marriage and romantic ones about wedding nights. What actually happens is that Patrick brings it off when they are both of them half-seas over during a party given by Julian Ormerod, a rich, kindly, vulgarly fantastical friend of his. This is something of a change from the way Jenny had imagined it "alone with a man in a country cottage surrounded by beautiful scenery, with the owls suddenly waking her up in the early hours and him putting his arms round her and soothing her..." and at the very end of the book a moral is let fall in a scrap of dialogue between her and Patrick:

> "... Well, those old Bible-class ideas have certainly taken a knocking, haven't they?"
> "They were bound to, you know, darling, with a girl like you. It was inevitable."
> "Oh yes, I expect it was. But I can't help feeling it's rather a pity."

The gloss is off the affair. Nothing will ever quite be as it was, as it might have been, and the future married life (if married life there is) of Patrick and Jenny will never be altogether free of regret, bitterness even. But that, one might say, is life.

So it is. And it is a sign of Mr. Amis' faithfulness to it that, although he indicates the possible result of mutual bungling, he never lets us think that things have gone completely wrong: only about 10 per cent wrong—and quite enough too. The underlying theme of the book is the way in which human relationships, of which the most intense instance is the sexual relationship, are always imperfect, fitting together with the friction and broken edges of a badly-cut jigsaw puzzle, occasionally giving rise to blank unhappiness, but more usually to a nagging regret: "If I had done this, then it might have been a little better...." Patrick's cruelty, charm, and greed, combined with his active conscience and real humanity, make him too egocentric to avoid hurting Jenny the ingénue, but not sufficiently so to prevent himself falling in love with her or not to realise when he has hurt her. And at his back is the fear of death, age, impotence. There is a scene of great power, in which an old man tells him what these things are like:

> "... And then, quite suddenly, almost from one day to the next, everything changed. Or

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rather, one thing changed, and everything else was exactly the same as before. Not intensified, thank heaven. The same. The same when I see them and the same when I don't see them, when I merely think about them. And when I talk to them, or have drinks with them, or sit in the car with them, or.... Until I touch them. Then it's different."

This is blood-curdling, and these *memento moris* are scattered throughout the book, usually associated with sexual failure. Patrick suffers from "le fiasco;" Jenny is told by his friend Graham what it feels like not to be attractive to girls. There is the stony misery of the wife of Jenny's down-at-heel landlord, Dick Thompson. There is Sheila who ends up looking for an abortion, and Anna who has to pretend to be French to get by. This is not a depressing book —it has a fine farcical surface—but the humour is perpetually held in rather a delicate balance by moments of great sadness and hints of the transitory nature of happiness.

In fact, the only really happy character is the cheerful extrovert, Julian Ormerod, and he achieves this state by an exaggeration of his own *persona* and a firm refusal to become involved. He is a very considerable comic character, and his speech, oddly composed of the kind of slang used by men with handle-bar moustaches in pubs, gives Mr. Amis a chance to employ all his verbal dexterity. Julian's role in the novel is to incarnate a kindly common sense and decent feeling, which emerge from behind the back-slapping mask and are considerably assisted by his sense of humour (Patrick's, on the contrary, is often used to hurt other people).

As for Jenny Bunn, from her point of view the progress of the plot is towards disillusionment. Nobody is quite what she believed them to be at first, and many of them are a good deal worse. It is not an easy task for a male writer to see his characters from the point of view of a young girl, but Mr. Amis seems to me to have brought it off. Jenny's part is perhaps written in a slightly different convention from that of the rest of the novel (her reflections and soliloquies sometimes slow down the plot), but the loss of her illusions is well conveyed, touching without being sentimental.

THE SETTING of *Take a Girl Like You* is roughly how we live now, with the parties, the bachelor flats and the pubs, the intellectual pretensions of the inadequate and the deprecatory joking of the educated. And the ideas it suggests are contemporary too. Mr. Amis has taken human relations at a moment when "Do what you like" becomes "I don't know what to do," and there is implied in this choice a criticism of our present lack of a system of signals, where sex is

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concerned. The right questions can neither be asked nor answered, and people are left to hurt each other blindly. Of course, it is the romantics who do the damage. Julian who is content to take-it-or-leave-it is the corrective here, but one which implies a limitation. To the balance established in the novel between melancholy and humour corresponds an ethical balance, which leaves decency winning by a short head. And *Take a Girl Like You* strikes me as the work of a modern moralist, one who does not wish to make people good, but feels that the possibility exists of making them a little better, a very little better. This is a sad, funny, humane book, which never ignores the complexities of human nature or fails to show the narrowness of the margins involved in human decision. It is a book which demonstrates quite clearly how good and serious a novelist Mr. Amis is.

Muriel Spark's new book, *The Bachelors*, is also very funny and displays a series of farcical incidents against what is fundamentally a sombre background. Her bachelors are the unmarried, middle-aging men who haunt Chelsea and Kensington devoutly doing their shopping on Saturday mornings and thanking God that their daily woman does not come to clean up on Sundays so that they can have a good lie-in with their rather bedraggled girl-friends. It is a life of some sterility, and Miss Spark makes of it a sort of wasteland, on which is played out the drama of Patrick Seton, a fraudulent medium, who ends by being sent to jail for five years. His case links him curiously with the bachelors, in particular with Ronald Bridges, handwriting expert and epileptic, through whose eyes much of the rather complex plot is seen.

Reading this rather wry little tale, I found myself thinking how well Miss Spark had got it all. Much of the dialogue is embarrassingly accurate:

> "It's a labour of love," Elsie said to Alice. After all, Alice had Patrick; and it was nice for a girl to have someone on the spiritual side of life. Men like Father Socket lifted one up whereas young men so often pulled one down.
>
> "You've got queer tastes," Alice had said the day before, sitting in the window with Elsie, at dusk.
>
> "There isn't any sex between Father Socket and me," Elsie said.
>
> "That's a detail," Alice said.

This sort of thing is entirely successful and bitterly comical. Where Miss Spark seems to me to succeed less well than in her picture of a London half-world is in her attempt to give it a transcendent significance. This is a Catholic novel, and we are told at one point that everyone is either a Catholic or a Spiritualist. (Is this really so?) There are uncomfortable suggestions that Ronald's epileptic fits are some kind of diabolical seizure atoning for or polarised by the devilishness of Patrick Seton. Matthew Finch, a Catholic who eats onions to be saved from sexual sin, ends by marrying Seton's pregnant mistress, who is due to be murdered by him, and Miss Spark drops hints to the effect that this marriage is in some sense a solution, a way out of the sterile world of bachelordom (on a literal level it is certainly that).

All this I found less satisfactory. Miss Spark seems to me less convincing when she tries to mingle heaven and hell with the Brompton Road than when she is solely concerned with its inmates, less convinced when she is talking about Catholicism than when she is depicting spiritualist fraud. *The Bachelors* is a fine account of how we live now, but should perhaps have been left there. As between Miss Spark's dark hints and Mr. Amis' statement of an ethical HCF, my choice is for a difficult humanism. As between these two novels it also appears to be more justified artistically.

Anthony Hartley

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LETTERS

Evelyn Waugh Replies

I AM most grateful to you for sending me a copy of your magazine, since I take this as an invitation to comment on your criticism of my work [Frank Kermode, "Mr. Waugh's Cities," ENCOUNTER, November].

Your reviewer's theme has long been tedious to me, but as it impugns my good faith as a Catholic, it is right to answer. He imputes to me the absurd and blasphemous opinion that divine grace is "confined" to the highest and lowest classes. May I draw his attention to a passage in a book of mine which he appears to have read with imperfect comprehension? (*Helena*, p. 145) "'*Odi profanum vulgus et areo.*' That was an echo from the old, empty world. There was no hate in her now and nothing round her was quite profane.... She was in Rome as a pilgrim and she was surrounded by friends. There was no way of telling them.... A Thracian or a Teuton might stop a fellow countryman in the streets, embrace him, and speak of home in his own language. Not so Helena and the Christians. The intimate family circle of which she was a member bore no mark of kinship. The barrow-boy grilling his garlic sausages, the fuller behind his reeking public pots, the lawyer or the lawyer's clerk, might each and all be one with the Empress Dowager in the Mystical Body.... There was no mob, only a vast multitude of souls, clothed in a vast variety of bodies, milling about in the Holy City, in the See of Peter."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

EVELYN WAUGH

London

[FRANK KERMODE writes: *The words of which Mr. Waugh complains occurred in a discussion of* Brideshead Revisited. *They were not intended to be read as an accusation of blasphemy, and if, as now appears, this is a possible and reasonable construction to put upon them, I withdraw them and offer my apologies. I had no presumptuous expectation of diverting Mr. Waugh, and no desire to calumniate him.*]

Labour Intellectuals

AFTER Scarborough things could never be quite the same again. Labour's agony over leadership and defence had produced a *crisis* in the most literal sense of the word—a turning-point for better or for worse. The challenge to Gaitskell had long been obvious. So now—for the first time—was the challenge *from* Gaitskell, his pledge (so much debated in later weeks) to "fight and fight again" to reverse the Conference decisions. A few professional politicians continued to equivocate—but to many lesser mortals the situation, though still complex, seemed clear enough. One point was especially clear. More than ever before Hugh Gaitskell needed backing, encouragement, and support.

This was the background to the now celebrated "pro-Gaitskell" statement issued on October 10th and signed by sixty-two members and supporters of the Labour Party in the Universities of Oxford and London. In very simple terms it applauded Gaitskell's Scarborough stand and urged the Parliamentary Labour Party to support him. Had time permitted a much wider canvas could have been made: many colleagues approached us afterwards and offered warm approval of the initiative. Drawn mainly—but not exclusively—from historians and social scientists the list of signatories was headed by the Principal of Somerville, and Professors A. J. Ayer, John Griffith, Herbert Hart, Stuart Hampshire, and William Robson.

Many of the signatories have been active in the Labour movement and in adult education for nearly all their working lives: they included three members of the editorial board of the *Political Quarterly*. They represent a brand of responsible opinion which has held a central place in British Labour's intellectual tradition. In their support for Hugh Gaitskell, and in their hostility to unilateralism, they were showing that this tradition was neither dead nor impotent.

I would not, nevertheless, want to exaggerate the episode's significance. Yet some of the public reactions deserve recording. Several critics wrote to *The Guardian* questioning the bona fides of the signatories. Two writers argued that "Labour Party supporters... cannot expect their views to be taken into account in the party's deliberations" and expressed alarm lest the dons were claiming that their political views "should carry more weight than those of less highly-educated persons." But the most explosive reaction came from the *New Statesman*. On October 16th the *Observer* had gently rebuked the *New Statesman* for not publishing the "pro-Gaitskell" letter (which had been published in other journals either in full or in part). The *New Statesman*'s leader on October 22nd began by saying that "many readers will have been shocked by the bizarre attack on this journal that appeared in last week's *Observer*." It was soon adding that so unjust was the attack that a few of its readers "have been seriously perturbed." Mr. Kingsley Martin was evidently himself both shocked *and* perturbed. In a strong letter to the *Observer* (October 23rd) he pointed out that his journal regarded the dons' letter as "a stale piece of news" (since the contents had been liberally reported in the *Times* and *Guardian*) and that it had reached his desk "in duplicated form and without a signature." Its publication in his correspondence columns "could not be entertained or seriously considered."

I respect Mr. Martin's view and would not presume to advise him on the proper conduct of his journal. But surely the *Observer* was right to remind him that, if he could not bring himself to publish the letter, he might have found room for a reference to it. Any such reference would, ironically enough, have been far briefer and

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less conspicuous than the coverage it eventually got on the *New Statesman*'s front page—a place normally reserved for more vital affairs. And surely the *Observer* was correct again in its view that "a weekly that has long claimed to speak for the intellectual Left must have had *some* interest in the news that... sixty of the leading Labour egg-heads in the country,* including some of its own contributors, no longer agreed with it." It is also interesting to note Mr. Martin's distaste for duplicated material and typed signatures. If the letter had come in a glossy jacket with facsimile signatures, would he really have been better pleased?

JULIUS GOULD

London School of Economics

* These included Hugh Clegg (Nuffield College, Oxford); Allen Flanders (*Socialist Commentary* and Oxford); H. L. Beales (Political Quarterly); Donald G. Macrae (London School of Economics); Dorothy and William Pickles (L.S.E.); John Plamenatz (Nuffield College); Saul Rose (St. Antony's College); J. R. Sargent (Worcester College); Peter Self (L.S.E.); Bernard Williams (University College, London); Richard Wollheim (University College, London); Steven Watson (Christ Church, Oxford); Philip Williams (Nuffield College, Oxford); Jay Blumbler (Ruskin College); Helen Gardner (Oxford); Max Hayward (St. Antony's College, Oxford).

The Jews

I SHOULD like to make a few remarks on the generous review of my book [ENCOUNTER, November], with much of which I am in agreement. The analysis of Nordic anti-semitism as a sub-conscious revolt of the pagans against Christianity itself is, I think, just and proved. Your reviewer is right in saying that I have not examined the deeper reasons for the Nazi savage campaign against the Jews, but simply set out the immediate causes and effects. It is true, too, that I have not examined the Jewish contribution to humanity through the life and teaching of Jesus. That is primarily because my theme was the Jews in our time, and not the Jews in history, though I started with a historical introduction to explain why Jews to-day are what they are. I agree with your reviewer that to-day both modern Christians and what he calls "Reformed Judaists"—I should prefer to call them Modern Jews —can and do talk to each other with great mutual benefit. Bodies like the Society of Jews and Christians in England, and individuals like the late Claude Montefiore and Israel Abrahams among Jews, and Professor Herford and Canon Box among Christians, have done valuable service by expounding the Christian Gospels to Jews and the Pharisees to Christians. The attitude is not restricted to "Reform" or "Liberal" Jews; and it is notable that in Israel, where the overwhelming mass of Jews who are religiously observant are Conservative, there is the deepest interest in the relation of Judaism to Christianity.

Teachers of Jewish history and comparative religion at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and in particular, the late Professor Klausner, have written notable studies on this theme. Professor Klausner's books on Jesus of Nazareth and on St. Paul have been translated into English by a Christian theologian with a perfect knowledge of

Protest

The Congress for Cultural Freedom, which is an association of writers, scientists, and artists united in the defence of freedom of expression, whose Honorary Presidents are JACQUES MARITAIN, REINHOLD NIEBUHR, JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN, SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA, KARL JASPERS, THEODOR HEUSS, *and* LEOPOLD SENGHOR, *and whose Executive Committee is headed by* DENIS DE ROUGEMONT, *has published the following statement in Paris:*

That a State must consider artists and intellectuals to be subject to the same laws as other citizens, is incontestable. The Congress for Cultural Freedom does not, therefore, intend to protest against the application of these laws.

But it is inadmissible that a category of citizens—before they are judged, or even after they have been tried and sentenced—should be made the object of additional punishment. Such, however, is the case of these artists and intellectuals to whom the French Government has just forbidden all activity in State-supported theatre, cinema, radio, and television; and that also of those teachers who have been deprived of the right to exercise their profession.

To-day, democracy can be maintained in a modern country only if the State consents that its competence and responsibility should never coincide with the full extent of its coercive power. It follows that the State must not permit itself to reply to its adversaries by the use of measures which the complex organisation of modern society has now placed at its disposal. In order to maintain a democratic régime it is imperative that the State itself should limit its powers, and that it should refuse to infringe liberties to which all, even its adversaries, have an equal right. It is on the basis of this principle that the State, though it may ask its authorised officials either to obey or resign, must grant to other individuals, whose activities are paid from public funds, a freedom of expression equal to that enjoyed by other citizens who are unsubsidised.

The Congress for Cultural Freedom, therefore, must protest against those recent measures of the French Government, the object of which is clearly to deprive artists and intellectuals of the normal right to exercise their professions. The Congress feels that these measures cannot but lead to the regimentation and servitude of art and thought. Their approval would place all public liberties in jeopardy.

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modern Hebrew. I would, however, join issue with Mr. Ussher about the lack of personal pathos and tenderness in the ethics of the Old Testament, as they were developed in the Christian era. Those qualities are found constantly in the literature of the Jewish mystics; but their books were sealed to the European peoples who could not learn their message till Dr. Schechter and Martin Buber made known the sayings and parables of the Hasidim, the more modern mystics.

As to the case of the Palestine Arabs, I agree that it calls for most generous action by Israel. (I have tried to deal with that matter in another book about Israel, which is appearing shortly.) The tragic frustration is that the Arab refugees have been pawns in a political game; and all the plans for repatriation of part of them in Israel, and resettlement of the rest in the Arab lands, have been rendered impossible by the refusal of the Arab States to negotiate any settlement with Israel.

I would say a word about Jewish exclusiveness, which your reviewer thinks I have understressed. It was essentially due to the Jewish excludedness from the Christian society, and the savage penalties imposed on proselytes to Judaism. In the early centuries of the Christian era Jews pursued an active mission, and made many proselytes. It was only when the Emperors Justinian and Theodosius made it a capital offence for a Jew to proselytise, and for a Gentile to be a proselyte, that the mission was abandoned within the Christian Empire. Even then it was continued in countries outside the Empire, as in the Arabian Peninsula and in Ethiopia. Significantly Jews are making proselytes to-day in Israel, where it is not a disability to be a Jew. If the mission is hitherto more passive than active, it is noteworthy that the Rabbinic authorities of Israel are more liberal than those of the Dispersion in admitting converts.

I agree that life in the National Home is adjusting the "psychological imbalance" of the Jews arising from their exclusion from ownership of the soil for centuries, and the unhealthy one-sidedness of urbanism. Though as yet in small numbers, Jews everywhere are turning to the soil and to farming, and in Israel the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture, 18 per cent, is higher than that in Britain and the United States.

Lastly, the "romantic story" I told of the Black Cochin Jews, who in the Middle Ages were dominated by newcomers, White Jews, was meant to be comic. As your reviewer says, Israel has always had its saving comedies; and the Jews throughout their trials have retained a talent for laughing at themselves.

NORMAN BENTWICH

London

Abram Tertz and Crankshaw

WHAT is pornography? What is iniquity? And who the hell is Mr. Crankshaw anyway to tell us that, in spite of both these grave shortcomings in his story, Abram Tertz is a born writer? Dear Lord, we knew it ourselves the moment we began to read *The Trial Begins* (ENCOUNTER, March issue; lazy readers who like to take part in polemics without reading the originals, go back to that issue and read that wonderful story), we knew it instantly that Mr. Tertz was a born writer. But Mr. Crankshaw sounds like a dead one when he graciously concedes, fangs in cheek, that Abram Tertz is a born writer—("which is not to say that he is a good one") adds he in parenthesis, explaining that "the quality of his mind is second-rate." I don't know into how many rates the minds of writers are divided, but I know that the very use of that word in what pretends to be an objective appraisal of that story, puts Mr. Crankshaw right into the category of the Interrogator. He sounds like *Pravda* criticising Pasternak. This is where *his* trial begins. Mine began with the very first sentence of that story. The brevity, the clarity, the honesty, the poetry of it made me feel ashamed of myself and of my fellow-writers (most of them, not all) in America, in Europe, anywhere in this free western world of ours.

Pornography? There is far more pornography in the front page of any daily London paper announcing a society divorce than in that whole story by Abram Tertz. Never before has this typically modern *"Ersatz"* character of love been so clearly and so cleanly described. Men humiliated since their birth by the daily compulsory hammering of idiocy into their heads (or does Mr. Crankshaw regard Soviet political teachings as worthy of our consideration?), men (in the West) interrupted, distracted, pulverised since their birth by schedules,

Legal Encounter

To-day's resumed hearing of the "Lady Chatterley" trial brought in the well-known literary and other figures for whom one would have looked in vain at its opening a week ago. In the afternoon Dame Peggy Ashcroft was there—her husband, Mr. Jeremy Hutchinson, is appearing for the defence as one of Mr. Gerald Gardiner's juniors. But in the morning, right after the court had sat, the judge ruled that, as counsel did not agree about it, prospective witnesses must leave the courtroom. At this Mr. Stephen Potter and Mr. Walter Allen, among others, left, while Mr. Stephen Spender stayed on to hear his magazine repeatedly referred to as "the ENCOUNTER. . . ."

THE GUARDIAN, *28 October*

Cross-examined by Mr. Mervyn Griffith-Jones, Mr. Graham Hough was asked if he agreed with Miss Katherine Anne Porter, writing in ENCOUNTER *["A Wreath for the Gamekeeper," February 1960], that the novel was "a dreary, sad performance, with some low passages of unintentionally hilarious low comedy," and "written with much inflamed apostolic solemnity." He said: "I think that is an eccentric opinion. . . ."*

THE TIMES, *28 October*

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noise, indifference, the daily struggle for a job and the idiotic conformism that goes with it, are bound to regard physical love as the only certificate of personal existence they may ever hope to have. Very few men know they exist because they think, as Descartes optimistically imagined. *Cogito Ergo Sum* is a much better, truer formulation of our modern humanity, and that is what goes on behind the scenes, under the lowest level of official and senseless "philosophies" if we may so describe them without laughing. Yury Michailovitch fears death, he feels the void of everything around him, so he comes to view love as the only reality. But as he is conditioned by the nonsense he lives with, his view of love is as nonsensical, absurd, inhuman as everything else in his world. This brings about his failure as a lover. He deals with his own body (and soul: they live together after all) in exactly the same authoritarian manner as the Soviet authorities have dealt with him so far. Nonsense continues, it is transmitted, transfused into the very bloodstream. And he does not realise that there is nothing humiliating about this: the humiliation was accepted long ago in a different province: that of the ancient Carthesian *Cogito*. Once more: it is not love he seeks, only a certificate. Abram Tertz has described this in very concise, moving, dignified terms. Nothing lascivious about it, nothing unnecessary. As for the "iniquity," where is it? Don't we feel, even in the author's humour, the great sadness that torments the young Russians who just cannot believe that the end justifies the means? This much for Abram Tertz's trial. Let us now take Mr. Crankshaw to task. Hear ye:

> What interests me is the reaction of Englishmen who have read this story. They are, as often as not, open-mouthed with amazement: the very idea that any product of Soviet society could write, or think, like that about life in general and Soviet life in particular, could express such bitterness and cynicism, could savage Marx and Lenin, could flavour sex with pornography, could guy the political police, seems never to have crossed their minds.

Who is to be blamed for that, I ask, if not the abstract notions of Russia given us by their propaganda? Everything is so stupid, so inhuman, that it is difficult for us to imagine that a Russian may cough, scratch himself, make a telephone call, laugh, or make love. And that is what the atmosphere of Russia does to us from a distance.

Crosland v. Castle

IT WAS NICE *of Barbara to write to me; and I much appreciated the complete absence of personal rancour in her "open letter." . . . She does not rebut the main point of my* ENCOUNTER *article—namely, that Soviet economic growth has little relevance to Labour's domestic policy; the future of the uncommitted nations will depend far more on political developments in the Congo than on Britain's economic performance; and if more economic aid should prove decisive we can easily afford it even at present rates of growth.*

Instead, she widens the argument, quite fairly, into a general discussion of nationalisation. Let us see where we agree and where we differ. I agree with all her objectives. I agree that some, selective, old-style nationalisation—that is, the taking over of particular firms or industries—will be necessary to achieving these objectives. I agree even more strongly that new forms of public enterprise are needed; she mentions government expenditure on research, and I could add many more instances.

But she goes much further than this, and I do not. She thinks that the pattern of ownership dictates the whole nature of our society; and she would therefore give nationalisation the first priority. I think that ownership is no longer the vital determining factor; and I would therefore give nationalisation a markedly lower priority.

She mentions three objectives in her letter. First, economic growth. This does not seem to have much to do with ownership, at least in advanced industrialised countries; for the Western European economies, all with a smaller public sector than our own, have achieved much higher rates of growth.

Secondly, equality. Here . . . a capital gains tax, a gifts tax, and higher inheritance duties would bite far more quickly and effectively than many years of old-style nationalisation. Sweden, relying primarily on such measures, enjoys a much greater degree of equality than Britain, though with a smaller public sector. But in Britain I would certainly supplement these measures by new-style nationalisation—i.e., share-buying by the State and other public authorities.

Thirdly, a higher priority for social spending on roads, hospitals, schools, etc. Barbara Castle adduces not one single argument to show why this cannot be achieved—as if course it is in Scandinavia—primarily through fiscal policy and government planning. The proportion of social spending varies greatly in different countries; but it varies, not with the pattern of ownership, but with the attitude of electorates and the will-power of governments.

None of our objectives, of course, can be attained if we remain an impotent opposition party. The cost of another ten years of Tory rule —in terms of higher rents and lower pensions, of fewer hospitals and more congested roads—would be appalling. The Swedish Socialists have just shown that an up-to-date Left-wing Party can win power even in an affluent society. Is this really such an immoral objective for the British Labour Party?

ANTHONY CROSLAND
in New Statesman, 1 October.

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Imagine what it must do to young people plunged into it since their birth.

In conclusion, Mr. Crankshaw advises that we read Tertz only as confirmation of trends clearly visible in many published works, and he insists: "It should be read, but only as confirmation." Well, may we disobey him and read this story as confirmation that Tertz is a great writer and poet?

NICCOLO TUCCI

Rome

"High, Low, and Modern"

IRVING KRISTOL's article in the August issue of ENCOUNTER is admirable, but fails to acknowledge the pessimistic implication of its argument—that once a democracy undertakes to satisfy the popular taste at the expense of its highest principles, the degenerative process thus set in motion appears, by rational analysis, as well as by historical example, to be irreversible. It is easy to plot the curve downward from Thomas Jefferson to Madison Avenue, but is it possible to imagine the process in reverse? How will a new aristocracy of talent and virtue make itself heard against the noise of the mass society? Neither our political parties nor our press pays much attention to the aristocratic remnant that still persists here. Nor can the remnant—divided against itself—argue who its members really are.

The downward course of democracy is determined by the generally accepted principle that the broadest public must be satisfied not only at the cost of virtue, talent, and principle, but even at the cost of survival. To emphasise this point is, admittedly, dangerous. It is reminiscent of the rhetoric of the 'thirties and we all know what personal and public disasters that led to. Mr. Kristol ends his essay wistfully with a question: Will our democracy produce leaders who will restore to America examples of enlightened political and cultural behaviour? But it seems to me that recent events have answered the question in the negative. Our democracy has in fact become Madison Avenue. And a democracy of this sort cannot produce such leaders because it doesn't want them. They would be un-American. As we sit here, waiting for the other shoe to drop, Mr. Kristol's hopeful question seems irrelevant and disingenuous; alternatively, its hopefulness seems rash rather than courageous.

JASON EPSTEIN

457 Madison Avenue,
New York

[IRVING KRISTOL writes: *There is not only a Madison Avenue technique of subverting American democracy, but also a Madison Avenue manner of deploring this subversion. This is the most likely explanation of Mr. Epstein's gaudy apocalyptic statements, to the effect that the existing trend is "irreversible" and that "our democracy has in fact become Madison Avenue." Does he really believe that he and I are the last of the Americans? Since he obviously has his doubts about me, we should then be a lonely crowd indeed.*]

Irish Terrorism

MR. R. H. S. CROSSMAN has ingeniously confused the issue [ENCOUNTER, October]. The new Establishment in Ireland does not feel embarrassed about the record of the guerillas in the 1916–21 period, even if it understandably does not care to refer to them as "terrorists." It may be true, as he says, that the pattern of civilian resistance to colonial oppression was established in that period; but why should he use, to describe that pattern, the loaded phrases about shooting British soldiers in the back and burning them alive as they slept—the stock-in-trade of British propaganda at the time?

In a sense they were true. The I.R.A. fired at whatever portion of a British soldier's anatomy presented itself, and the back, other things being equal, was a safer target than the front; they also burned down houses, though the number of occasions when they did so without warning the residents to evacuate appears to have been extremely small.

But it is a grotesque distortion to say that de Valera established the *principle* that to shoot in the back and to burn alive was the most effective way to win the struggle. There were terrible atrocities on both sides; but they arose in the course of reprisals—not as a result of deliberate policy. In any case de Valera was in the United States throughout the period when the guerilla pattern was being established.

BRIAN INGLIS

The Spectator,
London

African Playwrights

ENCOUNTER takes pleasure in announcing the results of the literary competition which we sponsored in connection with the recent celebration of Nigerian independence. The plays were read and judged by Ezekiel Mphalele, Stephen Spender, and Chenua Achebe.

As Ulli Beier (of the University of Ibadan) writes: "The first prize was awarded to WOLE SOYINKA for his *Dance of the Forest*.... It is a spectacular theatrical fantasy in which the living and the dead, gods and spirits, equally figure, and the attitude of a young nation to its past is symbolically and yet dramatically presented. At a 'gathering of the tribes,' glorious ancestors are conjured up, but their sharing of the historical occasion is a mixed affair, more horrible than inspiring. Faced with the reality of their past, hitherto romanticised, the tribes become disillusioned; but their attempt to shake off and forget the past fails: the ancient gods remain among them.... WOLE SOYINKA is known in London where he presented 'An Evening at the Royal Court Theatre' in 1959, including readings from his poetry, scenes from his plays, and songs for the guitar....

"The second prize was awarded to NKEM NWANKWO, a young and almost unknown writer, for his play *The Two Sisters*, which deals with a familiar African theme, that of the 'returners' (*i.e.*, spirits born to a human mother) who tarry to observe the human scene...."

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AUTHORS

John Strachey *writes about himself*: "... I am the son of St. Loe Strachey, the editor and proprietor of the *Spectator* which, in the period immediately before the First World War, was the leading Conservative weekly review. Had a rigidly orthodox education at Eton and Magdalen College, Oxford; at the latter edited with the present Lord Boothby the journal of the undergraduate Tory club. We made it so Left-wing that it had to cease publication.... Soon after coming down from Oxford, realised what my political opinions really were and joined the Labour Party. In 1924, stood unsuccessfully as a Labour candidate in the election of that year. During the 'twenties, edited *The Miner*, the journal of the miners' Trade Union, and took part in the General Strike of 1926.... In 1929, was elected to Parliament, and was Mosley's Parliamentary Private Secretary while the latter was a Labour Minister.... In 1931 I resigned from the Parliamentary Labour Party, with Mosley and a few others, in protest against the feebleness of the 1929–31 Labour Government's attempts to deal with the consequences of the great slump. But while Mosley went to the Right, towards Fascism, I went to the Left, towards Communism....

"During the 'thirties I published a series of books, of which the best known were *The Coming Struggle for Power* and *The Menace of Fascism*, which were, to a varying degree, pro-Communist. In 1940, I broke with the Communists because they refused to support the British war effort against Hitler; I insisted that Hitler must be resisted at all costs.... Rejoined the Labour Party, was elected to Parliament for Dundee, and served in the 1045–1951 Labour Government as Under-Secretary of State for Air, Minister of Food, and Secretary of State for War.... Since 1951, I have been engaged (in addition to Parliamentary duties as a spokesman of the Labour Party on military matters) on a work on the principles of democratic socialism, of which two volumes, *Contemporary Capitalism* and *The End of Empire* [cf. D. W. Brogan's review in ENCOUNTER, May, 1960; and reply by Strachey, June, 1960], have been published...."

Arthur Schlesinger, jr.—his father (*sr.*) was also Professor of American History at Harvard University)—has had two volumes of his "Age of Roosevelt" published in Britain (by Heinemann). Vol. I: *The Crisis of the Old Order* (1919–1933) and Vol. II: *The Coming of the New Deal*. He was a close adviser to both Adlai Stevenson in the 1956 Presidential campaign and John Kennedy recently.

Irving Kristol, who was Co-editor of ENCOUNTER (1953–58), served as Editor of *The Reporter* in New York for a year. He is now an advisor to an American publishing firm, is writing a book on U.S. political traditions, and has promised to contribute a fairly regular "New York Letter"...

Daniel Bell is Professor of Sociology at Columbia University and his *End of Ideology* was published earlier this year. His short critical articles in recent numbers ("Dissenting Opinions," September 1959, and "The Future of the Left," May 1960) aroused widespread comment....

Christmas Humphreys is a London barrister (Q.C.) who has written several works on Oriental philosophy and religion. His study of Buddhism appeared in the Penguin series, and his latest book is *Zen Comes West* (Allen & Unwin)....

Frank Kermode is Professor of Literature at the University of Manchester. He is our regular literary critic, and among his recent leading literary articles were considerations of Evelyn Waugh (Nov.), Isherwood (Sept.), Allen Tate and the Prince of Lampedusa (August), Beckett and C. P. Snow (July), and Vladimir Nabokov (June).

Andrew Forge is a well-known London art-critic. His contributions have appeared in *The Listener* as well as *The Times* and *New Statesman*....

Henry Fairlie is one of the best-known English political journalists (although he is still in his thirties); he has worked for the *Times*, the *Observer*, the *Spectator*, and most recently as columnist for the *Daily Mail*. When we published his study of the B.B.C. (ENCOUNTER, August 1959), we quoted a passage about him by R. H. S. Crossman, one sentence of which may still be relevant (although less to his current article than to the "memoir of the '50s" which we hope to print next month): "If it is the Establishment that makes young men angry, Henry Fairlie can claim to be the first of his generation to look back in anger...."

The **Saul Steinberg** vignette on page 62 is taken from *The Passport* (Hamish Hamilton).

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2. The owner is: Encounter Ltd., 25 Haymarket, London, S.W.1. Directors: Stephen Spender, Melvin J. Lasky, John C. Hall, Eric G. Webber, Margot Walmsley (Secretary).

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5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers *during the 12 months preceding the date* shown above was: 19,000.

Signature of business manager: John Hall.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 26th day of September, 1960. Ronald S. Friedman (a Commissioner for Oaths for life).

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